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ABSTRACT

CONTACT is an alternative school program for dropout students who return, and for students who do not benefit from a regular secondary school program. Presented are a history of CONTACT school, a study design, a description of how student needs are identified, and a section on the evaluation instruments. Study results attempt to answer questions concerning: (1) the characteristics and needs of the dropout students in CONTACT; (2) how CONTACT attempts to meet the needs of dropout students; and (3) the elements of the program at CONTACT that are successful in meeting the needs of dropout students. (Author/RMW)

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CONTACT  
An Alternative School

How It Meets the Needs of Dropout Students

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&  
Janis Gershman

#155

October, 1979

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- the students of CONTACT for completing questionnaires, rating scales and standardized tests and for agreeing to interviews.
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"Nothing is going to work except what  
meets the students' immediate perceptions  
of what they feel they should be doing  
in school."

Harry Smaller  
(CONTACT teacher)

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"All students attend for an education. I attend for the same reason. I would very much like to further my studies in English and mathematics.

I would like to learn to communicate with teachers as people rather than rulers of all people. I would like to communicate better with the world.

I would like some help and discipline in school, but I would also like to work on my own. I guess I need to be pushed a little, but I like to work on my own time and level.

Today, I find it is hard to look for a job with an education. How about without?

I have a good student to teacher relationship with my teacher who is fantastic -- not too hard and not too soft."

(CONTACT student)

"I feel students come to CONTACT because they are ignored at other schools, so they come for attention.

And I feel some students come here because it is an easy school to adjust to.

And another reason they come to CONTACT is because no other school would accept them.

I came to CONTACT because I got kicked out of another school. The reason I got kicked out is I couldn't cope with their school.

Some students come to CONTACT because they have problems which no one will listen to."

(CONTACT student)

"Most students attend school for a better education or because they can't find a job and need a place to be during the day."

(A CONTACT student)

"Students have come to CONTACT because of the opportunity to learn at their own pace with no one to bug them. They come here to learn to study and have a better education. If some students don't like it, they usually leave. If they like it, they stay. These days, you are better off in life with a grade twelve. Man, you can't even be a garbage man without a grade twelve education. Here there aren't any teachers that fill you up with their rules and no one gives you a deadline on your work.

I think if there were more CONTACT schools, a lot more dropouts would go back to school."

(CONTACT student)

## INTRODUCTION

During the 1973-74 school year, the Research Department of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto completed a study of dropout students entitled Patterns of Dropping Out (Young and Reich 1974). Here are three quotations from that study:

"The size of the dropout problem in Toronto is staggering. From our sample, we estimate that approximately 7,500 students dropped out over the course of the year, or 24 per cent of the total secondary school population. This is a rate about 2 1/2 times what has been reported for other Metro boroughs. Breaking down these figures by grades, it appears that only 40 per cent of the students entering grade nine will graduate from grade twelve and only 20 per cent from grade thirteen."

(page 43)

"The picture of dropouts which emerges from this study is of young adults whose decision to leave school is part of the fabric of their own personality, present circumstances and view of the future, as well as their past record of poorer than average academic performance."

(page 43)

"Each dropout is an individual....there is no single solution that the schools can adopt. Solutions need to be tailored to the several different types of dropouts. Furthermore, there can be no simple solutions since most students drop out in response to forces external as well as internal to the school."

(page 43)

The study identified six general types or patterns of dropping out which fairly well described most of the Toronto student dropout population. These were:

(1) The Work Oriented (53%)

These students are interested in assuming adult roles and in getting a job that serves that function for them. However, they do not have a clear idea of how their lives might develop later on. For these students, dropping out to work might be beneficial, allowing them to mature and develop a clearer idea of where they want to go.

(2) The Classic Dropout (23%)

These students have exhibited poor attitudes to school, have poor attendance, are failing subjects and are among the oldest at their grade level. For these students, leaving school is a negative act. They have no clear idea of their future and are likely to be unemployed after leaving.

(3) The Family Supporter (7%)

These are often New Canadians who leave school, sometimes against their wishes, to help support their families in times of crises. It is unlikely that these students will be able to continue full-time education in the future.

(4) The Homemaker (6%)

These young women leave school either to take up homemaking directly or to obtain employment in order to save money for marriage or a family. Leaving school is part of their life plan. Many of them are currently working. Economic pressures may force many of them to seek further training and to continue in employment, rather than take up full-time homemaking.

(5) The Intellectual Elite (3%)

These students have a variety of personal goals and a value system which emphasizes individuality. They do not view themselves as part of the mainstream of society and in many cases embody the "active radical response." These students have the capacity to do well in school, but have renounced the system.

(6) The Cultural Isolate (2%)

Some recent immigrants experience considerable difficulty in adjusting to the cultural and social environment of the school system. Although these are one of the highest achieving of the dropout groups, their isolation has caused them to withdraw from school.

During November of 1976, a committee was formed in response to Trustee Barr's request that the Director of Education, in consultation with the Chairman of the Board, bring forward recommendations relating to each of the six general types or patterns of dropping out.

The committee, which became known as the Patterns of Dropping Out Committee, presented its report containing thirty recommendations to the School Programs Committee of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto in June of 1977.

One of the committee's recommendations which was received and approved by the School Programs Committee and addressed the general problem of dropouts was:

"...that the Contact School Concept be evaluated to determine how it meets the needs of dropout students."

(Minutes of the Board, June 28, 1977,  
page 12)

The Patterns of Dropping Out Committee felt that such an evaluation would serve to: (1) provide CONTACT School with valuable feedback and (2) identify elements of the CONTACT School Concept which could be adopted by other schools (regular or alternative) to help meet the needs of dropout or potential dropout students.

The evaluation addressed the following four questions:

- (1) What are the needs of dropout students?
- (2) What are the characteristics of the dropout students in CONTACT?
- (3) How does CONTACT attempt to meet the needs of dropout students as identified in (1) above?
- (4) Which elements of the program at CONTACT are successful in meeting the needs of dropout students?

The evaluation was designed and carried out by the Research Department of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto over a period of two years according to the following timetable:

July 1977 - August 1977

- the study was designed;

September 1977 - December 1977

- the study was described to the Area Superintendents and the staff at CONTACT and their co-operation was assured;  
- the needs of dropout students were identified;  
- some instruments were developed;  
- tests were chosen;

January 1978 - May 1979

- more instruments were developed;  
- data were collected by using tests, questionnaires, interviews and by examining school records;  
- data were analyzed;

June 1979 - August 1979

13  
- the report was written.

## HISTORY OF CONTACT SCHOOL

During the spring of 1972, a group of educators composed of theorists and teachers evolved a plan for setting up a school designed to meet the needs of two groups of young people:

- (1) dropouts, and
- (2) students enrolled in secondary schools but not benefitting by their programs.

The alternative school was to be called CONTACT and the proposal drawn up by the educators, requesting the full-time placement in September 1972 of four teachers and two lay-assistants for a proposed enrolment of approximately fifty students, was passed by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto in June 1972. The proposal with addendum, recommendations and amendments is given in Appendix A. A pamphlet describing CONTACT distributed by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto is given in Appendix B.

Unfortunately, the proposal was submitted and approved only after the 1972 budget had been passed and teaching positions had been allotted to schools for the ensuing academic year. The CONTACT group was informed that the four teaching positions for CONTACT could be created only if and when it was demonstrated in September that the actual secondary school attendance figures exceeded the projections made the previous spring.

Rather than suspend plans for the school until October, it was decided to request that CONTACT begin in the fall as a part-time program, and then switch to a full-time program in January 1973. A proposal requesting this was submitted to the Advisory Vocational Committee. Consequently, on August 24, 1972, the Board approved CONTACT on a part-time basis for the fall of 1972. A budget of \$8,700 for thirty teaching hours per week and twenty-four lay-assistant hours per week and \$2,000 for equipment and supplies was also passed for the period from September 1972 to December 1972.

Because CONTACT was unable to begin full-time operations in the fall of 1972, major alterations had to be made in the original proposal. It was impossible to build up a continuous program that could focus on the affective development of the students outside of formal class time. There was no permanent location to which the students could go and be comfortable during any part of the day and there were no full-time staff members who could contribute in a positive way to the day-to-day activities and development of the students. The evening program was of most interest and benefit to those students who worked full time during the day.

Since the part-time operations not only affected the affective development of the students but affected their cognitive development as well, the CONTACT group came to the decision that it would not be beneficial for CONTACT to continue on a part-time basis.

Consequently, on March 22, 1973, representative students and teachers of CONTACT presented a proposal for CONTACT for the 1973-74 school year which was endorsed by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto and forwarded to the Budget Committee with a recommendation that a full-time program be included in the 1973 budget. The proposal for the 1973-74 school year was much the same as the original proposal for CONTACT (Appendix A); however, based on their experiences, the following changes and additions were made:

#### Student Body

The group hoped to attract the students from the downtown area who required extra help in the basic skills. They hoped that the Board of Education would instruct the secondary schools in Toronto to provide a list of students who dropped out of the regular program so they could make a personal contact with the students and encourage them to enroll in an alternative program.

Teachers

Because of the nature of the student body, the group expected the Board to assign teacher positions in the same student ratio as was used in the special high schools in the city (seven teachers would be required for 100 students).

In addition, they felt that 35 hours per week of lay-assistant time was essential to the operation.

Accommodation

The group asked for a setting designed for 100 students. They wanted six classrooms, one common room and some kitchen facilities. If they had to share a building, they hoped for one entrance they could use exclusively.

Curriculum

The group proposed that the curriculum would take the following form for the majority of CONTACT's students:

(a) Basic Skills

Approximately 40% of the curriculum would involve concentrated and structured work in the area of language and mathematics skills.

(b) Community Studies Courses

Another 40% of the curriculum would consist of an integrated program aimed at raising the students' consciousness of their immediate community. Such subjects as consumer education, law, man in society, geography, home economics, history, world politics, health, environmental science, and nursery school and child care would be combined to provide a basic program in community orientation.

(c) Optional Courses

The remaining 20% of the curriculum would consist of optional courses: art, music, physical education, typing, theatre arts, etc.

The students' need for short-term goals would be met by operating the community studies and optional courses according to three-week modules in the afternoon which would allow the students to obtain one-quarter of a credit for each module.

For the 1973-74 school year, six rooms on the third floor of the Duke of York Elementary School were made available to CONTACT and the Principal of Castle Frank High School became the signing officer with the following responsibilities: \*

(a) Staffing

The signing officer shall ensure that any new member of the staff of CONTACT be properly qualified. However, aside from this, the choice of the staff member will be made by the staff and students of CONTACT as stated in the proposal which the Board has already passed, subject to the submission of its decision to the appropriate officials of the Board for consideration.

(b) Accreditation of Courses

Since it is the legal responsibility of the signing officer to ensure that accredited courses fall within the guidelines, CONTACT's signing officer shall inspect all courses of study for this purpose and shall submit to the Ministry for approval any courses for which there are no current guidelines.

(c) The Granting of Credits

As it is the legal responsibility of the signing officer to ensure that any student granted a credit has earned it, CONTACT's signing officer may wish to attend classes in the school or to examine the work of any student in any subject. The CONTACT staff will comply with any such wish on request.

(d) In any other matters, the staff and students of CONTACT shall make decisions democratically.

(e) There will be continuous liaison (on a weekly basis) and consultation between the staff and the signing officer on all matters concerning:

1. responsibility as designated under current legislation;
2. matters affecting the security, health and welfare of the students;
3. the maintenance of a positive learning atmosphere; and
4. the professional responsibilities of members of the OSSTF (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation).

Approximately thirty students were in attendance at the school's opening on September 4, 1973 and the enrolment increased to seventy-five in

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\* These responsibilities are a combination of: (1) conditions laid down by the Ontario Ministry of Education, (2) requirements of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto and (3) requests of CONTACT staff.

January 1974. At that point, enrolment was frozen and the decision was made to consolidate the student body into sixty regularly attending students who were gaining maximum benefit from the school.

CONTACT operated on a democratic basis, the school's signing officer delegated responsibility in most matters to the staff. The staff in turn (with the exception of the area of program, for which it retained control) delegated much responsibility to the student body which dealt with matters relating to general activities and student involvement within the school.

In March of 1974, CONTACT staff and students reported two drawbacks to sharing facilities at the Duke of York Elementary School. First, because of the location of the stairs, it was necessary for the students at CONTACT to enter and leave through a main area of the Duke of York classes. Unfortunately, this caused some problems and on several occasions CONTACT students were reprimanded for loitering in the area or for being involved in "hassles" with students from the elementary school. Secondly, while the classroom space was certainly sufficient for the number of students enrolled, the lack of specialized areas was a problem -- especially a library-study room, a science lab and adequate gym facilities. For these reasons, the staff and students felt that a change of location seemed necessary for the fall.

Also, during March of 1974, the signing officer asked to be relieved of his duties so that he could devote more of his time to his own school. The CONTACT staff requested that the area superintendent, or some other person from the administration, be appointed to the position.

At the meeting of the Alternative in Education Committee of March 11, 1974, the CONTACT staff presented a detailed outline of the school's operation for the 1973-74 academic year (most of the details have been described in the preceding paragraphs). At that time, the staff also presented the following requests for the 1974-75 academic year:

- (1) They expected an enrolment of approximately 100 students for the 1974-75 academic year (they had thirty students on a waiting list). They hoped to be able to expand to accommodate all the students and to provide more flexibility (in terms of types of courses given and assignment of individual help) with the extra staff generated (to make up a total of seven teachers).
- (2) As stated above, they were seeking alternate accommodation. Ideally, they wanted to be in their own building; however, if that were not possible, they wanted a space completely set off from the rest of the building with their own direct access to the outside. They wanted the space to include seven classrooms, as well as rooms suitable for a student-staff lounge, a library, an office and a storage area. They wanted a minimum of 10 hours per week of gym use and access to an auditorium or other room which would seat 100 people.
- (3) They hoped that the agreement they had had with the first signing officer would form the basis of their relationship with the future signing officer.
- (4) They expected that the general program would closely follow that which had been in operation during the 1973-74 academic year with the addition of a wider range of subjects made possible by the increase in staff. They particularly wanted to introduce typing and included the purchase of the necessary equipment in their budget.
- (5) Since CONTACT had never received the initial grant traditionally given new schools to purchase non-recurring items, they requested a larger capital budget to purchase such items as library books, science equipment, physical education equipment, furniture, audio-visual equipment and office equipment. They were willing to accept used items which might have been available within the school system.

CONTACT opened, for the second year of full-time operation, on September 3, 1974, again on the third floor of the Duke of York Elementary School. Enrolment increased steadily from forty-two students in September to eighty-six students in March. The new signing officer was the area superintendent.

The program at CONTACT had become fairly well established by that time and was divided into five general areas (the 1974-75 timetable is shown in Appendix C):

A. Basic Skills

Mathematics - When students enrolled at CONTACT, their achievement level was assessed and they worked individually at their own rate from that point. Most students were working at a pre-grade-nine level. Students completed successive units of worksheets and were tested at the end of each unit before being allowed to move to the next.

English - Students worked individually at their own speed, using material from a weekly "package" of assignments. The program was structured in such a way that every student had to complete weekly assignments in three areas of language development -- creative expression, reading comprehension and appreciation and language usage.

B. Community Studies

This was the broad name used to describe academic subjects taught in the afternoon for four days a week in three-week modules. Approximately thirty class hours were spent on each subject and special permission was granted by the Ministry to award one-quarter of a credit for each course successfully completed. At the end of each three-week period, the students chose which, of several courses offered, they would take during the next three weeks.

C. Affective Education

In addition to the academic subjects, approximately five hours each week were devoted to the affective program which consisted of three group periods, a weekly general meeting, a physical education period, a speakers' hour and a judiciary committee meeting.

D. Individual Studies

On Wednesday afternoon, the program was run on an individual basis. Several students did volunteer work in community agencies, while others could work on an individual course of their own choosing, take part in a film appreciation class or attend general study hall. 21

E. Extra-Curricular Activities

The students and staff played sports together every Tuesday evening. Several field trips were taken during the year.

During their second year at Duke of York Elementary School, the CONTACT staff and students found that the problems they had outlined the preceding year with respect to that location had become more acute and, because they also wanted to expand the program, felt that the need for another location was even more pressing and should be a top priority for the fall of 1975. They presented the Board of Education for the City of Toronto with the following list of priorities to aid in the search for new accommodation:

1. The school should be located in the River-Gerrard area where most of the students live.
2. There should be space suitable for eight teachers plus a student/staff lounge, a library, an area suitable for a science laboratory, an office, washrooms and a minimum of ten hours per week access to a gym.
3. A more open area which could be adapted to various uses.
4. Sharing with an elementary school would be better than sharing with a secondary school.

At the meeting of the Alternatives in Education Committee of April 16, 1975, a resolution was approved to establish a Search Committee to find different space for the CONTACT program for the 1975-76 school year. CONTACT also requested that the number of staff be raised from six to eight for September 1975.

CONTACT was located at Duke of York Elementary School for the 1975-76 school year and was eventually staffed by seven teachers.

On February 1, 1976, CONTACT School opened up a storefront education centre on Parliament, North of Dundas Street. It was staffed by one full-time

teacher assigned from CONTACT School and a co-ordinator and two youth workers paid by a LIP\* grant (the grant also covered the rental of the building and a telephone). The Centre was established because the staff had experienced difficulty in reaching a certain portion of the students. Those young people seemed to want something from the school -- they went fairly regularly and "hung around" -- and yet they seemed unable and/or unwilling to go to classes and benefit from the instruction. Because many of those students came from the immediate neighbourhood and from very low socio-economic settings, the school felt especially concerned about providing some kind of program for them which would be of benefit.

The CONTACT Centre provided a variety of different services:

1. An information centre about secondary and post-secondary programs available in the greater Toronto area;
2. A counselling role for people wishing to clarify their educational-vocational plans;
3. Informed and structured classes in basic skills upgrading; and
4. Involvement in community volunteer projects.

The day-to-day operations of the Centre were under the control of the storefront staff and students, while over-all policy and direction were determined by the CONTACT School staff.

The annual report from CONTACT presented to the Board of Education for the City of Toronto on March 2, 1976 included the following information and requests:

1. They again requested a change of location. They felt that the shortcomings of their program were mostly caused by the physical setting (individual and separate classrooms). They

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\* Federally funded Local Initiative Program.

felt it was necessary that the students not feel hemmed in or separated off from the rest of the school community and that being part of a group-learning process necessitated being able to be present anywhere in the building. They stated they were prepared to engage in a search for suitable, non-Board property.

2. They hoped to begin the 1976-77 academic year with 8 teachers and 112 students..
3. During the 1975-76 school year, they had established a resource centre within CONTACT with a teacher assigned to it on a full-time basis. They hoped to continue and expand the model.
4. They hoped to continue and expand full-day trips for the whole school. They also hoped to include three five-day trips and two three-week, long-distance trips.
5. They had several students thirteen and fourteen years of age who had been referred to them directly from senior elementary schools and felt there was a trend towards more requests from lower age groups; therefore, they wished to assign such students to a new elementary component of CONTACT and offer them separate programs. Initially, they hoped to consider students in the grade 5-8 range; however, the CONTACT staff felt that the concept of a K-13 school was exciting and were giving it serious consideration.
6. They were planning to initiate a series of one to three-week teacher exchanges during the 1976-77 academic school year with other alternative schools in Canada and the United States.
7. The LIP grant for CONTACT Centre was soon to terminate. If they continued the Centre in the fall and could find no other funding, they hoped the Board of Education would assign two full-time certified teachers to it. The Centre would still require two youth workers (often referred to as streetworkers) and a co-ordinator. They also felt a larger physical setting would be required.

8. They had filed papers to establish a limited-liability corporation to assume the responsibility for and co-ordination of various extra-Board educational projects listed below. They hoped the "company" would have mostly community people -- parents and others -- on its Board of Directors.

- (a) A school bus was to be purchased for use by CONTACT School, other schools and other groups and agencies in the community.
- (b) They intended to establish a residence for approximately six older CONTACT students.
- (c) At some time in the future, they hoped to acquire the use of some rural property in order to develop a rural component of the on-going CONTACT program. They had observed that a rural setting and new interpersonal relationships had been very helpful for some students.

On June 28, 1976, the Alternatives in Education Committee received a progress report from the CONTACT Centre requesting that the Board assign two teachers to the Centre and assume financial responsibility for the co-ordinator and two streetworkers. On July 8, 1976, the Board adopted the following recommendation:

"That subject to the provision of suitable accommodation for the CONTACT Education Centre -

- (a) One teacher be assigned to the Centre at the beginning of the 1976-77 school year, and an additional teacher be assigned to the Centre later in the school year if enrolment warrants it;
- (b) That funds up to \$7,200.00 be provided from the general contingency to permit the Centre to employ two streetworkers and a co-ordinator.
- (c) That the Director of Education report on a search for alternative funding for this program."

During September and October of 1976, while separate accommodations were being sought, the Centre was located in CONTACT School. The staff consisted of a teacher and a co-ordinator who worked with a group of students and

developed plans for re-opening the Centre. Early in November, two street-workers added and the Centre was re-established in the basement of the Parliament Street Library House. The space was made available without cost to the Board of Education and students were able to take advantage of the Library's "Right to Read Program" and other resources. After about three weeks of operation, there were six students enrolled either because of an inability to fit into the CONTACT School program or as a result of poor attendance patterns. The goal of the Centre was to bring people to a point where they felt capable of re-entering a regular program.

The co-ordinator of the Centre served as business manager, participated in program development, supervised the activities of the streetworkers and served as a source of information and informal counselling for people visiting the Centre. One streetworker was responsible for following up on students who were not attending and making contact with potential new students. That involved visits to other schools in the area and to such gathering places as restaurants, pin-ball establishments and youth centres. The second streetworker performed a liaison function with service agencies and citizen groups in the community in order to assess their needs and to handle referrals to the Centre.

The staff regarded the optimum enrolment of the Centre to be about fifteen students at any given time with another ten persons using the facility on a casual basis.

The basic components of the CONTACT School program -- the individual basic skills program, the community studies program, the legislative and judicial functions in the school in which the students played a major role, and the opportunity for students to participate in community volunteer work -- remained much the same during the 1976-77 academic year. However, some important changes

were made within the general framework:

- (1) A mathematics specialist was hired in January to develop and improve the mathematics program. During the mornings, she went around to different groups and taught mathematics. Then, in the afternoons, she worked on curriculum development. She also planned workshops for the rest of the staff so she could share her expertise with them.
- (2) Phased classes were introduced in January to better meet the needs of the students who had widely different abilities in terms of the basic skills and working independently. There was one class of students whose reading/writing skills were pre-grade nine and/or needed constant teacher direction, five classes of students who had fair basic skills but who still required some teacher direction and one class of students who had good basic skills and were capable of initiating and carrying out a great deal of work with limited teacher direction.
- (3) During most of the 1976-77 school year, they ran a program in co-operation with the Catholic Children's Aid Society in order to provide a program for some students from CONTACT and some young people who were wards of C.C.A.S. who were finding it very difficult to make the transition to high school. The program was similar to the regular CONTACT program, but also involved a program of affective development and a life skills course. The C.C.A.S. provided a social worker and a student child-care worker to work with a CONTACT teacher assigned to the program. Because the C.C.A.S. administration did not feel that they could follow through on their commitment to supply personnel to the program, it was terminated in March.
- (4) In December, the Board of Education approved the rental of the former Shoprite store at 310 Gerrard Street East for the new location of CONTACT School and, during the winter, the staff and students made plans for using the new open-space facilities. They moved into the new location during April of 1977.

(5) The plans for the limited-liability corporation were never realized due to several complications. Consequently, the ownership of the school bus was transferred to the Church Street Day Care Centre which was incorporated as a charitable organization. CONTACT was still able to use the bus but had to hire a driver. The expense of hiring drivers cut down the number of trips they could make.

CONTACT began its fifth year of day-time operation and its first full year in the new Gerrard location in September 1977. This two-year evaluation of CONTACT to determine how it meets the needs of dropout students was also begun then.

The 1977-78 academic program at CONTACT remained very similar to that of other years. In the mornings, the students remained with a group teacher who worked with them on English, mathematics and another option. The mathematics specialist also worked with each group in the mornings.

In the afternoons, the other academic subjects -- science, history, geography, man in society as well as art, music and physical and health education -- were taught in three-week blocks. During the afternoon courses, there was a great deal of emphasis on going out into the community and on bringing speakers into the school.

The 1977-78 school year saw the establishment of a class for students with skills significantly below a grade-nine level. Those students remained with two teachers who did team teaching for the entire day. The program included a variety of methods depending on the needs of each student.

During the first few years of operation, CONTACT placed a great deal of emphasis on a volunteer program as an integral part of every student's schedule. Later they decided to encourage that sort of program only for those students who were able to work independently. The volunteer program which operated out of Harbourfront was particularly important in the 1977-78 school year.

Several students were involved in putting out a school newspaper approximately once a month and all students were encouraged to contribute to the paper.

The Centre, which was located in the same building, became more fully integrated with the school during the 1977-78 school year. The staff of the school and Centre agreed that the Centre's workers would be responsible for:

- (1) Support services to students;
- (2) Constant supervision of attendance;
- (3) Counselling as it relates to family, courts, public welfare, teachers and group homes;
- (4) Co-ordination of the speakers' hour, extra-curricular activities and the volunteer program;
- (5) Resource pool for ongoing courses;
- (6) Public relations activities which included booths at community events, canvassing the area with posters and leaflets, holding a regular Thursday lunch hour information meeting and using the school band to promote the school; and
- (7) serving on community groups and committees.

The academic year, 1978-79, was the second year of the evaluation and CONTACT's sixth year of day-time operation.

The academic program again remained basically the same, although there were some timetable changes (the 1978-79 timetable is shown in Appendix C). Rather than remain with one teacher all morning, the students in the credit program (not pre-grade nine students) moved through three different classes during the morning of mathematics, English and an option chosen from the following: history, geography, physical and health education, theatre arts, typing and independent study. The afternoon program on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday involved the students in a community studies class (an academic subject studied with an awareness of using community resources and/or of applying theoretical concepts to their community); these courses each lasted for four weeks and allowed successful students to earn one-third of a credit. On Wednesday afternoons, the students were involved with courses which lasted for one-half of the year.

They could choose from such courses as sewing, writing clinic, bachelor survival, carpentry, volunteering in day care programs and elementary schools, journalism or video-tape production.

In addition to the credit program, CONTACT continued to operate a non-credit upgrading program for those students whose skills were significantly below grade nine, level four. Those students stayed with one teacher all morning and did concentrated work on reading and writing. In the afternoon, they were taught a variety of subjects by all teachers on a rotating basis.

The students changed the school's constitution so that an elected student representative could have a vote at all staff meetings. The weekly general meetings were still a part of the school's program.

The weekly speakers' hour brought the following people and others into the school during 1978-79: candidates in the November municipal election, Women's Press with a slide show of their work with immigrant children, the editor of Ward Seven News, Greenpeace members to talk about nuclear power and the "Save the Whales" campaign, a representative from the postal worker's union, a member of Oxfam, members of the R.C.M.P. and the MacDonald Commission, a disc jockey, and a group of former CONTACT students attending the Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto.

Twice during the year, regular classes were suspended for a week in order to conduct special sessions on sexuality and on fitness. The first day of each of these weeks was set aside to allow the teachers to meet individually with each student in their homeroom groups to evaluate his/her progress during the past term and to make plans for the coming term.

One administrative change made during the year was to do away with the three-week probation period for students who were sixteen years of age and over. Previously, all students had to show that they really wanted to get into CONTACT by attending regularly for a three-week probation period.

Once students had registered and attended one day of classes, they were placed on the rolls. Students who were under sixteen were still required to go through the three-week probation period.

CONTACT made only one request for the 1979-80 academic year. They requested continued funding for the CONTACT Education Centre staffed by three people and outlined their work as follows:

- (1) counsellors;
- (2) representatives in the community;
- (3) resource people;
- (4) liaison people;
- (5) voting members in school policies and the decision-making process;
- (6) public relations;
- (7) extra-curricular (music, yoga, etc.).

#### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted according to the following steps which will be described in only the most general terms in this section. The details will be presented when most appropriate throughout the remainder of the report.

##### Step One

The beginning step was to identify the needs of dropout students which should be met by an alternative school such as CONTACT. Consequently, a variety of persons -- CONTACT teachers, CONTACT students, the parents of CONTACT students, trustees, administrative staff, social agents and principals of feeder schools -- were asked to specify such needs. The needs most frequently mentioned by the respondents were identified and the study was then developed to ascertain how and to what extent each need is being met by CONTACT School.

##### Step Two

For each need identified, methods of evaluation were then chosen to determine how and to what extent the need is being met. The method(s) chosen were different for each need but included standardized tests, teacher interviews, student interviews, teacher-rating scales, student self-rating scales, examination of school records, paper and pencil questionnaires, follow-up procedures, and the investigators' informal observation of and involvement with the school over a two-year period (resources were not available to make formal, structured observation a part of the study). More than one method of evaluation was used for as many of the needs as possible. This proved to be a very wise decision for the samples, in the final analysis, turned out to be very small for many of the methods of evaluation employed.

Step Three

The evaluation would not have been complete without a thorough, detailed description of the program and the persons involved with the program.

The description of the program comprises the following information:

- (a) teacher characteristics such as age, sex, educational background, work experience, degree of involvement with CONTACT, reasons for wanting or not wanting to teach at CONTACT and likes and dislikes about CONTACT. This information was gathered by interviewing the teachers;
- (b) student characteristics such as sex, age upon entering CONTACT for the first time, length of time enrolled in CONTACT, number of other high schools attending, number of elementary schools attended, number of high school credits attained from other high schools, number of high school credits attained from CONTACT, place of birth, language(s) spoken, source of financial support, place of habitation, reasons for attending CONTACT and ways of finding out about CONTACT. This information was gathered by interviewing the students and by examining their school records;
- (c) CONTACT Centre workers' characteristics such as age, sex, education, work experience, language(s) spoken, degree of involvement with CONTACT Centre, reasons for wanting or not wanting to work at CONTACT Centre and likes and dislikes about working at CONTACT Centre. This information was gathered by interviewing the Centre workers;
- (d) description of the CONTACT School program. Some information was collected from the annual reports written by the school staff for the Board of Education for the City of Toronto and has been presented in the section which gives the history of the school. However, the bulk of the information was gathered through in-depth interviews with the teachers, the students and the Centre workers. The information describing the program was gathered.

and is presented as it relates to the "needs of dropout students" which are the foci of the study. Some information was also accumulated informally as a result of the investigators' many visits to the school;

(e) description of CONTACT Centre. Information was gathered in the same way as for the description of the CONTACT School program.

Step Four

In addition to the information collected to describe the various aspects of the program and how it is designed to meet the needs of dropout students, a great deal of other data were also collected to determine to what extent the program is meeting those needs. These additional data from tests, questionnaires, rating scales and interviews were mostly collected at four time points over the two-year period of the study:

January/February	1978
April/May	1978
October/November	1978
April/May	1979

The following over-lapping groups of students were identified for the collection of those data:

	<u>Number</u>
January 1978 - Permanent students.....	118
October 1978 - Permanent students (30 were also on the January rolls).....	90
April 1979 - Permanent students (55 were also on the January and/or October rolls).....	96
Students on the January and October rolls who dropped out during the following five months.....	January 31 October <u>37</u> 68
Students on the January and October rolls who remained five or more months.....	January 50 October <u>40</u> 90
Students on the June 1978 rolls but not on the October 1978 rolls.....	49
Students not accepted after a period of probation (January 1978 to March 1979).....	77
Case Studies.....	10

Step Five

The final step consisted of analyzing the data and formulating conclusions as to how and to what extent CONTACT meets the needs of dropout students. The analysis of the data included coding the interviews, scoring rating scales, questionnaires and standardized tests and calculating change scores. The data analysis did not include elaborate statistical procedures. In some instances, means, standard deviations and t-tests were used to formulate conclusions. However, in most cases, the results are presented as frequency counts, usually converted to percentages and presented in tables.

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEEDS OF DROPOUT STUDENTS

The first step taken in the evaluation was to determine the needs of dropout students at CONTACT School as perceived by different groups of people. This activity was carried on during October and November of 1977. The letter and form which were used are shown in Appendix D. The groups of people who were asked to respond, the number in each group and the number and percentage who responded in each group are shown in Table 1. It is noteworthy that not a single parent or guardian responded. Because of this, the investigators decided not to include the parents in any other aspect of the evaluation (they were not even sent follow-up letters as were the people from the other groups who did not respond). The lack of response from the parents or guardians indicates, of course, that the students are either alienated from their parents and living apart from them, or are living with parents or guardians who take little interest in their education.

TABLE 1

#### GROUPS OF PEOPLE ASKED TO IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF DROPOUT STUDENTS

Group	Number Asked To Respond	Number Who Responded	Percentage Who Responded
CONTACT Teachers	7	6	86%
CONTACT Students	100	54	54%
Parents of CONTACT Students	100	0	0%
Administrative Personnel of The Toronto School Board	12	7	58%
Trustees of The Toronto School Board	13	2	15%
Principals of Feeder Schools	18	12	67%
Social Agents	14	9	64%

The responses to the open-ended question were analyzed, categorized and placed in order of frequency of mention for each group. The needs of the dropout students at CONTACT School were thus identified by each group as follows:

CONTACT Teachers

1. Basic academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic)
2. Social skills (good self-concept, an ability to relate to others)
3. Life skills (knowledge of citizens' rights, knowledge of social issues, decision-making skills)
4. Credits and diploma
5. Miscellaneous

CONTACT Students

1. Basic academic skills at own level and pace (reading, writing, arithmetic)
2. Friendly, understanding teachers (personal attention)
3. Ability to find a good or better job
4. Wide variety of courses with flexibility of course scheduling
5. Democratic and relaxing atmosphere (freedom of student expression, little bureaucracy)
6. Credits and diploma (credible for entrance into other high schools, community colleges and universities)
7. Learning to learn skills (good independent study habits)
8. Social skills (self-awareness, an ability to get along with others)
9. School structure (principal, attendance rules)
10. Small classes
11. Life skills (knowledge of social issues, responsibility to self and others)
12. Miscellaneous

Parents of CONTACT Students

(No responses)

Administrative Personnel of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto

1. Social skills (self-worth, self-discipline, an ability to get along with others)
2. Democratic and relaxing atmosphere (a share in decision-making, good teacher-pupil relationships)
3. Basic academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic)

4. Life skills (inner-city survival skills)
5. Job skills
6. Practical and supportive environment
7. Individualization
8. An ability to re-enter regular schools
9. Individual counselling
10. Miscellaneous

Trustees of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto

1. Social skills (self-worth, an ability to form good interpersonal relationships)
2. Life skills
3. Basic academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic)
4. Credits and diploma
5. Democratic environment (student input)
6. Job skills
7. Opportunity for parent involvement
8. Miscellaneous

Principals of Feeder Schools

1. Democratic and relaxing atmosphere (student input, freedom of mobility, caring teachers)
2. Individualization (all levels of instruction, objectives for each student)
3. Social skills (positive self-image, knowledge of how to develop personal goals)
4. An ability to re-enter regular schools
5. Flexibility
6. Structure
7. Miscellaneous

Social Agents

1. Life skills (an understanding of social institutions, knowledge of social issues, survival skills)
2. Basic academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic)
3. Social skills (self-worth, dignity, ability to socialize with peers)
4. Democratic and relaxing atmosphere (student decision-making, few rules)
5. Individual attention

6. Wide variety of courses with flexibility of course scheduling
7. Experience in social agencies
8. Communication with parents and community
9. Miscellaneous

The preceding responses from the various groups of people were then examined again and the following six categories of needs of dropout students were chosen as the ones most frequently mentioned and also most amenable to evaluation. The evaluation was then planned with a view to determining how and to what extent CONTACT School meets these six categories of needs of dropout students (further details are provided in the next section).

1. Basic academic skills
2. Social skills
3. Life skills
4. A democratic and relaxing atmosphere
5. Individualization and flexibility
6. Academic or employment advancement (credits, diploma, return to regular schools, job)

#### EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE STUDY

The evaluation instruments used in this study consisted of student, teacher and Centre worker interview schedules, standardized tests of basic academic skills, a self-appraisal inventory, a social skills rating scale, and a life skills questionnaire. The following is a brief description of these instruments including their role in the study, the way in which they were coded and/or scored, and the rates of response associated with each instrument. All the instruments, with the exception of the standardized tests of basic academic skills, are shown in the appendices.

The rates of response are not high for several reasons:

1. Many of the students change their place of residence frequently, thus making it extremely difficult to reach them by telephone or mail, particularly if they had dropped out of CONTACT. A large proportion of those students who were not interviewed had telephone numbers which were no longer in service. Follow-up letters proved to be almost useless in locating the students.
2. Some students refused to participate in one or all parts of the study, often expressing a strong dislike for anything resembling a "test."
3. Some students who attempted to complete tests and questionnaires did not finish because of such things as reading problems, short attention span, interruption, etc.
4. The investigators and assistants had only a limited amount of time available to be at CONTACT for the administration of the tests and questionnaires. If a student did not happen to be attending CONTACT during those times, he or she was not included in the sample.
5. The investigators felt that it was unreasonable to expect changes to occur in the students in less than five months of attending CONTACT and thus planned to hold the post-test sessions approximately five months after the pre-test sessions. The first pre-test session was held during January and February of 1978. However, the investigators were not able to hold a post-test session five months later in June 1978 because they found that very few students attend CONTACT during June. Therefore, another pre-

test session was held in October and November of 1978. The post-test session was then held five or six months later in April and May of 1979 and students from both pre-test sessions were included -- the numbers were small because many of the students from the first pre-test session were no longer on the rolls and because many students were not attending school.

#### The Student Interview Schedules

Four interview schedules were developed for the students. The interviews were conducted both by telephone and on a face-to-face basis at CONTACT School. The schedules contained closed-ended and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were coded by research clerks under the guidance of the principal investigator.

The first student interview schedule, shown in Appendix E, was developed for students on the January 1978 and October 1978 rolls who remained on the rolls for five or more months after January or October or both. Of the 110 students who fell into this category, 73 or 66% were interviewed.

The interview schedule was designed to accomplish several things. The students were asked to rate, using specially constructed rating scales shown in Appendix G, how they felt CONTACT had helped them to learn, improve or change, in the six areas identified as needs of dropout students. In addition to the ratings, they were also asked to elaborate on their answers by describing in detail why or how CONTACT had or had not helped them and to give, in many cases, suggestions for improvement. The students were also asked why they enrolled in CONTACT, how they found out about it and what they generally liked and disliked about the school. They were asked what they thought about CONTACT Centre. Finally, the students were asked to provide some information of a more personal nature -- place of birth, language(s) spoken, source of income, place of residence, persons with whom they lived, etc.

The second student interview schedule was identical to the first with the exception of the few additional questions shown in Appendix F and was used for students on either the January 1978 or October 1978 rolls who left CONTACT during the school year and within five months after January or October. Of the 68 students who fell into this category, 25 or 37% were interviewed. The main purposes of the additional questions were to determine why students left CONTACT and what they had been doing since they left.

Students are required to go through a three-week probationary period before they are put on the permanent rolls of CONTACT. (During the second year of the study, this applied only to students under sixteen years of age.) The third student interview schedule shown in Appendix H was constructed for those students who were on probation but did not get on the permanent rolls. The students were asked whether they wanted to get on the rolls and why they didn't get on the rolls. They were asked what they had been doing since that time. In addition, they were asked questions the other students were asked regarding personal information, general likes and dislikes about CONTACT and CONTACT Centre. There were approximately 77 students between January 1978 and March 1979 who were on probation and did not get on the rolls. Of these, 32 or 42% were interviewed.

There were 49 students on the June 1978 rolls who did not return in the fall of 1978. An attempt was made to locate these students six to ten months after June and to interview them using the fourth student interview schedule shown in Appendix I. They were very difficult to locate and only 19 or 39% were interviewed. Information was available about a few others through secondary sources. The main point of following up that set of students was to determine what they were doing and why they did not return to CONTACT in the fall of 1978.

### The Teacher Interview Schedule

All the teachers at CONTACT were interviewed, seven during the 1977-78 school year and the one new teacher during the 1978-79 school year. With the exception of three,<sup>1</sup> the interviews were taped.

The teacher interview schedule is shown in Appendix J and was designed to gather four kinds of information:

1. Teacher characteristics such as sex, age, educational background, work experience, language(s) spoken and circumstances associated with their being employed at CONTACT.
2. Selected opinions about CONTACT such as amount and kind of involvement, changed impressions about CONTACT, likes and dislikes about working at CONTACT and overall opinions about how CONTACT affects students favourably and unfavourably.
3. A description of how the program at CONTACT is designed to meet the six identified needs of dropout students. As the reader can see by examining the interview schedule, a great deal of detail was sought from the teachers on this subject.
4. Opinions about CONTACT Centre.

### The CONTACT Centre Worker Interview Schedule

CONTACT Centre was staffed by three workers during the first year of the study (1977-78), two of whom left and were replaced during the second year of the study (1978-79). All five were interviewed.

The Centre worker interview schedule is shown in Appendix K and was designed to gather the following information:

1. Centre worker characteristics such as sex, age, educational background, work experience, language(s) spoken, and circumstances associated with their being employed at CONTACT.
2. Selected opinions about CONTACT such as the relationship between the school and the Centre, amount and kind of involvement, contribution of the workers to CONTACT, likes and dislikes about working at CONTACT and overall opinions about how CONTACT affects students favourably and unfavourably. 12

The IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory

The IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory (see Appendix L) was developed by the Instructional Objectives Exchange of the University of California at Los Angeles and is composed of eighty statements. Each item requires either a "TRUE" or a "FALSE" response. For each statement, one point is scored for the appropriate response ("TRUE" or "FALSE") connoting a high self-concept. Therefore, the maximum possible score on the IOX is eighty. The items on the inventory also yield subscores on four dimensions of self-concept:

1. Family i.e., one's self-esteem yielded from family interactions;
2. Peer i.e., one's self-esteem associated with peer relations;
3. Scholastic i.e., one's self-esteem derived from success or failure in scholastic endeavors; and,
4. General i.e., a comprehensive estimate of how the self is esteemed.

Of the 178 students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls, 96 or 54% were administered the inventory on a pre-test basis. These 96 students were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for less than five months and those who had attended for five or more months. Means and standard deviations for the four self-concept subscale scores and the total score were calculated for each group. Statistical tests were performed to determine whether students who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months had different self-concept scores than those who had been attending for less than five months. In addition, there were 22 students who were tested during January or October and were available for post-testing during April 1979. The means and standard deviations for the four self-concept subscale scores and the total score were calculated for these 22 students for both pre-tests and post-tests. Statistical tests were performed to determine if their self-concept scores had changed as a result of remaining in CONTACT for at least five months.

The Social Skills Rating Scale

The Social Skills Rating Scale is shown in Appendix M and was developed especially for the study. The instrument was developed in consultation with the teachers and after the investigators had interviewed a large number of students during the first year of the study. The student interviews provided ideas for many of the items on the scale. That is, the first students interviewed suggested a variety of behaviours which they felt indicated a change in their social skills because of their stay at CONTACT.

All the teachers were asked to complete the scale for each student with whom they felt they were familiar, first during October 1978 and then during April 1979. Seven of the eight teachers agreed to this task in October, while only four participated in April. (This change in the participation rate of the teachers probably limits the reliability of the data collected from the Social Skills Rating Scale.)

Of the 90 students on the October 1978 rolls, 76 were pre-rated by at least one teacher in the fall and 21 were post-rated by at least one teacher in the spring.

A total score was calculated for each student by first reversing the ratings on items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 30. The resulting 30 item ratings were then averaged across all the teachers who rated that student. These 30 averaged item scores were finally added to obtain a total score. The maximum score possible was 150 while the minimum score possible was 30.

Two comparisons were made to determine whether a change had occurred in the students' social skills as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the 76 pre-rated students were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for less than five months and those who had attended for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the total scores of

the two groups. Statistical tests were performed to determine whether students who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months were rated differently by the teachers on their social skills than those who had been attending for less than five months. Secondly, the pre-ratings and post-ratings of those 21 students who were rated twice were statistically compared to determine if a change had occurred in the teachers' ratings of the students' social skills as a result of their stay at CONTACT.

The Life Skills Questionnaire

The Life Skills Questionnaire is shown in Appendix N and was also especially developed for the study. The instrument was also developed in consultation with the teachers and after the investigators had interviewed a large number of students during the first year of the study. The student interviews provided ideas for many of the items on the questionnaire.

Of the 90 students on the October 1978 rolls, 44 or 49% completed the questionnaire on a pre-test basis. Of those 44, 23 were still on the April 1979 rolls and 20 completed the questionnaire on a post-test basis.

A total score was obtained for each student by adding the item scores (as shown on the instrument in Appendix N). The maximum total score possible was 47.5 while the minimum score possible was 0. The raw scores were converted to percentages.

Two comparisons were made to determine whether a change occurred in the students' scores on the Life Skills Questionnaire as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the 44 pre-tested students were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for less than five months and those who had attended for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the total scores of the two groups. Statistical tests were performed to

determine whether students who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months scored differently on the questionnaire than those who had been attending for less than five months. Secondly, the pre-test and post-test scores of those 20 students who answered the questionnaire twice were statistically compared to determine if a change had occurred in their knowledge about life skills as a result of their stay at CONTACT.

#### The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills

Four basic academic skills tests were chosen, in consultation with the teachers, to administer to the students to determine whether the students' skills had changed as a result of their stay at CONTACT. The four tests which were chosen from the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills, (E. M. King, 1974) were:

1. Vocabulary (17 minutes)
2. Reading Comprehension (55 minutes)
3. Mathematics Concepts (30 minutes)
4. Mathematics Problem Solving (30 minutes)

Form 3 of the tests was administered to the students on a pre-test basis while Form 4 was used for the post-tests.

Of the 178 students on the January and/or October rolls, 94 or 53% completed the Vocabulary test, 83 or 47% completed the Reading Comprehension test, 80 or 45% completed the Mathematics Concepts test and 82 or 46% completed the Mathematics Problem Solving test on a pre-test basis.

The following is a summary of the numbers of students available for post-tests, and the numbers of students who completed the post-tests.

	<u>Completed Pre-Tests</u>	<u>Still on Rolls in April 1979</u>	<u>Completed Post-Tests</u>
Vocabulary.....	94	28	20 (71%)
Reading Comprehension.....	83	22	15 (68%)
Mathematics Concepts.....	80	20	12 (60%)
Mathematics Problem Solving.....	82	21	11 (52%)

Scoring keys were used to find the students' raw scores on the four tests and then to convert them to grade-equivalent scores.

Two comparisons were made to determine whether a change occurred in the students' basic academic skills as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the pre-tested students were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for less than five months and those who had attended for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the grade-equivalent scores of the two groups for each of the four tests. Statistical tests were performed to determine whether students who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months scored differently than those who had been attending for less than five months. Secondly, the pre-test and post-test scores of the students who were retested were statistically compared to determine if a change had occurred in their basic academic scores.

## FINDINGS

### Selected Student Characteristics

#### Data Collected By Interviewing Students

The information presented in this section was gathered by interviewing 130 students, 98 on the permanent rolls of CONTACT School and 32 who had been on probation but did not get on the permanent rolls.

Table 2 indicates that the majority of the students or 80% were born in Canada -- 69% were born in the province of Ontario. When compared with the statistics of the 1975 Every Student Survey \* (Deosaran, Wright and Kane, 1976), it was found that Canadian-born students interested in CONTACT School are over-represented (70% of those in the Every Student Survey were Canadian-born).

TABLE 2  
STUDENTS' PLACE OF BIRTH

Place of Birth	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Ontario	90	69.2%
Other Canadian Province	10	7.7%
Canada, Province not given	4	3.1%
Jamaica	10	7.7%
England	4	3.1%
United States	3	2.3%
Trinidad	2	1.5%
Other Countries	6	4.6%
No Response	1	0.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* This report gives the place of birth for Toronto elementary and secondary school students for the school year 1974-75.

The students were asked to name the language they learned to speak first. The results are shown in Table 3; 86% learned to speak English first. In the 1975 Every Student Survey, 54% of the students learned to speak English first. The CONTACT School population is not comparable with the population of students attending school in the City of Toronto.

TABLE 3  
FIRST LANGUAGE STUDENTS LEARNED TO SPEAK

First Language	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
English	112	86.2%
French	6	4.6%
Greek	2	1.5%
Chinese	2	1.5%
Hungarian	1	0.8%
Cree	1	0.8%
Ojibwe	1	0.8%
Sign Language	1	0.8%
NO Response	4	3.1%
TOTAL	130	100%

Only about 25% of the students lived with both parents (Table 4) while close to 40% lived with their mother only.

Only about 18% of the students were living with both parents where one or both parents were working. The living arrangements and the sources of income and support for the remaining 82% of the students are detailed in Table 5. Approximately 44% of the students were in a situation where the source of income was Welfare, Mother's Allowance, pensions, Unemployment Insurance or some other form of assistance. Another 10% of the students were working.

TABLE 4  
PEOPLE WITH WHOM STUDENTS LIVED

People With Whom Students Lived	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Mother	50	38.5%
Both Parents	32	24.6%
Living Alone	16	12.3%
Friend(s)	9	6.9%
Group Home	6	4.6%
Father	4	3.1%
Sibling(s)	4	3.1%
People Not Related	5	3.8%
YWCA	1	0.8%
Co-op	1	0.8%
No Response	2	1.5%
TOTAL	130	100%

The data indicate that students come from backgrounds of low socio-economic status. To further illustrate this point, the jobs of the students' fathers and mothers are shown in Tables 6 and 7. The students were asked to state their parents' jobs even though they may not have been living with them and/or receiving support from them. For many cases and a variety of reasons, the students could not provide the information. However, for those cases where information was available, it is obvious that nearly all the jobs are of a working-class nature.

The reasons the students went to CONTACT School and the ways they found out about it are listed in Tables 8 and 9. Obviously, many of the students are at CONTACT because they were experiencing difficulties in the regular schools. Students were most likely to find out about CONTACT School from their friends, although several found out from social service agencies, guidance counsellors and their families.

TABLE 5  
STUDENTS' SOURCES OF INCOME OR SUPPORT

Students' Sources of Income or Support	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Living with mother/mother on welfare or allowance	17	13.1%
Living with mother/mother working	15	11.5%
Living with both parents/both parents working	13	10.0%
Living alone/student on welfare	12	9.2%
Living with both parents/father working	8	6.2%
Living with other people/student on welfare	7	5.4%
Living with other people/student working	6	4.6%
Living with both parents/both parents on welfare or pension	6	4.6%
Living with mother/mother unemployed	6	4.6%
Living in group home/receiving assistance	5	3.8%
Living with friend/friend working	4	3.1%
Living alone/student working	3	2.3%
Living with father/father working	3	2.3%
Living with both parents/student working	2	1.5%
Living with both parents/mother working	2	1.5%
Living with mother/student on welfare	2	1.5%
Living with both parents/student on welfare	1	0.8%
Living with mother/student working	1	0.8%
Living in group home/student working	1	0.8%
Living in student residence/supported by parents	1	0.8%
Living with father/receiving assistance	1	0.8%
Incomplete Information	14	10.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 6

FATHERS' JOBS OR SOURCES OF INCOME

Father's Job or Source of Income	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Salesman	5	3.8%
Printer	3	2.3%
Truckdriver	3	2.3%
Caretaker	2	1.5%
Painter	2	1.5%
Store Clerk	2	1.5%
Trying to be an Actor	1	0.8%
Factory Worker	1	0.8%
Shipworker	1	0.8%
Electrician	1	0.8%
Dock Worker	1	0.8%
Bank Worker	1	0.8%
Superintendent	1	0.8%
Restaurant Worker	1	0.8%
Sewing Mill Worker	1	0.8%
Indian Chief	1	0.8%
Mill Worker	1	0.8%
Vice President of Paint Company	1	0.8%
Baker	1	0.8%
Police Officer	1	0.8%
Machinist	1	0.8%
Foreman - Steel Company	1	0.8%
Sheet Metal Worker	1	0.8%
Teacher	1	0.8%
Mason	1	0.8%
Mechanic	1	0.8%
Contractor	1	0.8%
Businessman	1	0.8%
Carpenter	1	0.8%
Engineer	1	0.8%
Merchant Marine	1	0.8%
Tattoo Artist	1	0.8%
Newspaper Job	1	0.8%
Pension	7	5.4%
Deceased/Sick	10	7.7%
Does not know father and his occupation	7	5.4%
No information recorded	62	47.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 7

MOTHERS' JOBS OR SOURCES OF INCOME

Mother's Job or Source of Income	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Mother's allowance/pension	23	17.7%
Housewife	12	9.2%
Unemployed	12	9.2%
Student	4	3.1%
Store Clerk	4	3.1%
Cleaner	3	2.3%
Job at Home (self-employed)	3	2.3%
Babysitter	2	1.5%
Waitress	2	1.5%
Laundry	1	0.8%
Maid in Hotel	1	0.8%
Cafeteria Worker	1	0.8%
Factory Worker	1	0.8%
Superintendent	1	0.8%
Cashier	1	0.8%
Ward Aid	1	0.8%
Data Processor	1	0.8%
Practical Nurse	1	0.8%
Secretary	1	0.8%
Real Estate	1	0.8%
Postal Worker	1	0.8%
Office Worker	1	0.8%
Certified Accountant	1	0.8%
Vending Machine Operator	1	0.8%
Printing Shop Supervisor	1	0.8%
Government Employee	1	0.8%
Northern Manupress Employee	1	0.8%
Metro Trust Employee	1	0.8%
Credit Union Teller	1	0.8%
Counsellor at Half-Way House	1	0.8%
Guidance (Personnel)	1	0.8%
Worker at Welfare Department	1	0.8%
Deceased	1	0.8%
Does not know mother and her occupation	1	0.8%
No information recorded	40	30.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 8

REASONS STUDENTS WENT TO CONTACT SCHOOL (N = 130)

Reasons	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Didn't like regular school	29	22.3%
Behind in school work/basic skills low/ forgotten work	13	10.0%
CONTACT is free/relaxed/open	11	8.5%
Kicked out of regular school	10	7.7%
Poor attendance at regular school	9	6.9%
No other school would accept student	9	6.9%
To learn/finish school/get proper schooling	8	6.2%
Regular school is too large	5	3.8%
Fired from job/no job	5	3.8%
Too late in year to get into regular school	5	3.8%
CONTACT is close to home	4	3.1%
Couldn't get along with kids at regular school	3	2.3%
Wanted to proceed at own rate	3	2.3%
Personal problems	3	2.3%
To upgrade reading	3	2.3%
Classes are small in CONTACT	2	1.5%
To upgrade mathematics	2	1.5%
Fighting at regular school	2	1.5%
Always late in regular school	1	0.8%
Couldn't get along with principal in regular school	1	0.8%
Tired of changing classes in regular school	1	0.8%
Too many classes in regular school	1	0.8%
On dope	1	0.8%
Going crazy in private school	1	0.8%
Don't know	4	3.1%
Miscellaneous	18	13.8%
No response	6	4.6%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

Data Collected From Student Records

The following information about the students was gathered from the students' records. Of the 178 students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls, 157 or 88% of the students had records available for examination.

For this sample of 157 students, there was an almost equal number of men and women -- 80 men and 77 women.

Table 10 gives the ages of the students the first time they enrolled in CONTACT School. Close to 70% of the students were 15, 16 or 17 years old.

TABLE 9

THE WAYS STUDENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT CONTACT (N = 130)

The Ways Students Found Out About Contact	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Friends	54	41.5%
Social Services	32	24.6%
Guidance Counsellor	17	13.1%
Family	15	11.5%
Probation Officer/Court	2	1.5%
Streetworker	1	0.8%
No Response	5	3.8%
Miscellaneous	10	7.7%

\* This column does not add up to 100% since a few students gave more than one response.

Tables 11 and 12 show the number of elementary and other high schools the students had attended. The majority of the students (71%) for whom information was available had attended three or more elementary schools. And, the majority of the students (71%) for whom information was available had attended one or no other high school. Many of the students (44%) had not obtained any credits from other high schools and those who had, had obtained very few (see Table 13).

Finally, Table 14 shows the length of time the students (some of whom were still enrolled at the time the data were gathered) had been enrolled at CONTACT School. Approximately 80% had been on the permanent rolls for less than 17 months and approximately 50% had been on the rolls for six to ten months.

Summary

The following observations have been selected from the data presented in this section:

- 51% of the CONTACT students were male
- 70% were 15, 16 or 17 years of age when they entered CONTACT

- 71% had attended three or more elementary schools
- 71% had attended one or no other high school
- 44% had obtained no credits from other high schools
- 80% had been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT for less than seventeen months
- 80% were born in Canada
- 86% learned to speak English first
- 25% lived with both parents
- 18% lived with both parents where one or both had a job
- 40% lived with mother only
- 44% were supported financially by Welfare, Mother's Allowance, pension, Unemployment Insurance or some other form of assistance
- the most common reason for going to CONTACT was that, for some reason or other, the students couldn't cope in the regular schools
- students were most likely to find out about CONTACT through their friends.

TABLE 10

THE AGES OF STUDENTS THE FIRST TIME THEY ENTERED CONTACT SCHOOL

Age	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
12	1	0.6%
13	2	1.3%
14	14	8.9%
15	41	26.1%
16	36	22.9%
17	31	19.7%
18	16	10.2%
19	7	4.5%
20	3	1.9%
21	-	
22	-	
23	-	
24	1	0.6%
No Information	5	3.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 11  
THE NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED

Number of Elementary Schools	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Adjusted Percentage for N = 101 Students
1	12	7.6%	11.9%
2	17	10.8%	16.8%
3	15	9.6%	14.9%
4	18	11.5%	17.8%
5	16	10.2%	15.8%
6	9	5.7%	8.9%
7	6	3.8%	5.9%
8	2	1.3%	2.0%
9	3	1.9%	3.0%
10	1	0.6%	1.0%
13	1	0.6%	1.0%
18	1	0.6%	1.0%
No Information	56	35.7%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 12  
THE NUMBER OF OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS ATTENDED

Number of Other High Schools	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Adjusted Percentage for N=134 Students
0	20	12.7%	14.9%
1	75	47.8%	56.0%
2	26	16.6%	19.4%
3	11	7.0%	8.2%
4	1	0.6%	0.7%
5	-	-	-
6	-	-	-
7	1	0.6%	0.7%
No Information	23	14.6%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 13

NUMBER OF CREDITS OBTAINED FROM OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS

Number of Credits	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Adjusted Percentage for N=117 Students
0	52	33.1%	44.4%
1 to 1.9	10	6.4%	8.5%
2 to 2.9	5	3.2%	4.3%
3 to 3.9	5	3.2%	4.3%
4 to 4.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
5 to 5.9	7	4.5%	6.0%
6 to 6.9	9	5.7%	7.7%
7 to 7.9	10	6.4%	8.5%
8 to 8.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
9 to 9.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
10 and over	10	6.4%	8.5%
No information	40	25.5%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 14

LENGTH OF TIME ENROLLED AT CONTACT\*

Length of Time**	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
1 month	2	1.3%
2 months	3	1.9%
3 months	5	3.2%
4 months	6	3.8%
5 months	10	6.4%
6 months	21	13.4%
7 months	11	7.0%
8 months	22	14.0%
9 months	5	3.2%
10 months	18	11.5%
11 months to 16 months	24	15.3%
17 months to 20 months	6	3.8%
21 months to 26 months	10	6.4%
27 months to 30 months	2	1.3%
31 months to 36 months	1	0.6%
37 months to 40 months	-	-
41 months to 46 months	1	0.6%
47 months to 50 months	1	0.6%
No information	9	5.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* 51 of these students were still on the rolls when this information was gathered from the student records.

\*\* The number of months are school-year months only. The months of July and August are not included.

Selected Teacher Characteristics

This section describes some characteristics of the nine teachers employed at CONTACT School during the two years of the study -- 1977-78 and 1978-79. Six of the teachers were on staff for both academic years; one was on staff for only the second year; and one who left to start a new alternative school was replaced by another midway through the first year. Six of the teachers were men and three were women. The information was collected by interviewing eight of the teachers during the first year of the study and one during the second year.

At the time of the interview, the teachers were all in their late twenties and early thirties. The youngest was 28 years of age and the oldest was 35 years of age.

All nine teachers spoke English as a first language. Three spoke other languages (French, Italian, Spanish and/or Punjabi) as well.

Six of the teachers had obtained their high school education in Ontario while, one had obtained it in New Brunswick, one in America and one in the West Indies.

Six of the teachers had obtained most of their university education in Ontario while two had obtained it in America, and one partly in New Brunswick and partly in Saskatchewan.

Eight of the teachers had obtained their teacher training in Ontario while one had obtained it in America.

Two of the teachers had Master's degrees, one of whom was working towards a Ph.D. Two other teachers were also working on Master's degrees.

The teachers' areas of specialization at university were as follows (some teachers had specialized in more than one area):

- History (4 teachers)
- Mathematics (2 teachers)
- Science (2 teachers)
- Physical Education (2 teachers)
- Canadian Studies (1 teacher)
- Latin (1 teacher)
- Philosophy (1 teacher)
- Cross-cultural Education (1 teacher)
- Psychology (1 teacher)
- English (1 teacher)
- Aeronautics/Engineering (1 teacher)

The teachers' previous teaching experiences or other experiences related to dealing with youth were as follows (some teachers had had more than one kind of experience):

- Toronto High School (5 teachers)
- Supply teaching (2 teachers)
- S.E.E.D. - an alternative school (1 teacher)
- Grade 7 & 8 Special Education (1 teacher)
- Junior High School (1 teacher)
- Toronto Island School (1 teacher)
- Night School (1 teacher)
- University/Community College (1 teacher)
- University/Teaching Assistant (1 teacher)
- No previous teaching experience (2 teachers)
- Youth Hostel Program (1 teacher)
- Playground leader (1 teacher)
- Child care worker (1 teacher)
- Summer camps for handicapped (1 teacher)

With respect to the amount of time the teachers had been at CONTACT, the teachers fell into two groups. Five teachers were relatively new and, at the time of the interview, had been teaching there for less than two years. The other four teachers had been associated with CONTACT for four or more years.

One of the teachers had been involved with the group which wrote the original proposal for CONTACT and another had become involved because of knowing that person. Another had been teaching at S.E.E.D. (a Toronto alternative school for the elite student) and heard about CONTACT through a friend at S.E.E.D.

Four teachers indicated that they had wanted to teach in an alternative school or in a school where they could try something different from the regular system -- these people found out about CONTACT either from ads in the newspaper or through friends. The remaining two teachers were "bumped" into CONTACT, a practice which both felt left something to be desired.

Summary

The teachers at CONTACT School were fairly young (around 30 years of age), quite well educated, (four of the teachers had completed or were working on graduate degrees) and spoke English as their first language.

A very large part of their combined high school education, university education and teacher training had been obtained in Ontario.

One teacher had had previous experience with an alternative school and one had had formal training related to teaching in alternative schools. Only two had had no other teaching experiences.

None had had a lot of experience with young people from the working class in a capacity other than teaching.

With the exception of two teachers who were "bumped" into the school, all were teaching at CONTACT because they wanted to be involved in educating young people in a setting different from the regular school system.

Basic Academic Skills

Reading and Writing

The teachers' description of how reading and writing are taught. Most teachers referred to the wide range of reading and writing abilities which the CONTACT students have. The research data (presented later in this section) certainly support their observations. During the time of this study, the wide range of abilities was being dealt with by placing the students with very low skills in a special class referred to as the "pre-nine class." However, even with that

arrangement, each teacher still had students with very different skills and interests.

CONTACT has no formal, highly structured or technically oriented reading and/or writing program, although the teachers have apparently made concerted efforts at times to develop such a program. Two teachers, in particular, spoke about the lack of a formal reading and writing program; they had opposite points of view. One teacher felt it was very ironic the school lacked such a program in the face of the feeling of both teachers and students that the teaching of the basics is most important and the fact that it is compulsory for every student. That teacher felt the school had suffered from the very beginning because of the lack of a formal program for teaching reading and writing. The other teacher thought that it is impossible to develop a package or program for students with such a variety of skills and believed that the approach taken to teaching the basics should be one in which the teacher considers where the student is at and what he is willing to do.

The students at CONTACT are taught to read and write on an individual basis. In fact, the approach is so individualized that some teachers, when asked what else they would like to do to teach those skills, stated they would like to have the chance to do more group work.

Many of the teachers said they first try to determine the students' interests and abilities. This is mostly done without the use of formal tests or attitude questionnaires (although, at times they have used the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests), but by simply getting to know the students and by closely examining samples of their work. While some teachers emphasized finding out the students' interests and others emphasized finding out the students' levels of ability, the underlying principle is to deal with the students on their own terms and to avoid the laying on of a program supposedly designed for a particular grade level or a particular age. One teacher, in particular, reported that it is important to

help the students rid themselves of any preconceived notions they might have that they can't read, aren't supposed to be able to read or should be reading at a certain level.

With respect to determining interests, one teacher tries to discover whether the students prefer reading or writing. Other teachers mentioned finding out whether students preferred to read horoscopes, comic books, newspaper articles, short stories, novels, etc. Then, in most cases, the students' programs are started in those areas of interest and expanded from there.

Apropos of determining levels of ability, the teachers first decide whether or not the students should be placed in the pre-nine class. For those placed in the pre-nine class, the teachers then proceed to further diagnose the students' abilities by actually listing the students' reading and/or writing vocabulary (one teacher described a student who had a reading vocabulary of only about twenty words). For those placed in the regular classes, one or two teachers conduct a systematic evaluation of the students' abilities by assigning work on teacher selected material at a fairly high level. The other teachers reported little in the way of additional diagnostic work.

The students in all the classes are then encouraged to do a lot of reading and writing at their own level with material they choose and are interested in while proceeding at their own pace.

In the pre-nine class, the teachers use the students' existing vocabulary to write stories for them to read silently, aloud and together. In addition, the students answer questions about the teacher-written stories, write about them and discuss them. New vocabulary is gradually introduced into the stories. A large portion of the day is devoted solely to learning to read and write.

The pre-nine teachers commented on the lack of good materials for those students with very low skills but who were often "street-wise." They said the best materials were those with low vocabulary and high content. One of the

pre-nine courses was called "Cops and Robbers" and included a lot of detective novels. Other materials the teachers found appropriate were:

- (1) The Pal reading series
- (2) The Topliners reading series
- (3) The Young Romance series
- (4) The T. Nelson Spelling series

The teachers of the regular classes all emphasized that they use a wide variety of materials although they differed slightly in their opinions about what types of material the students should be allowed to read. One teacher insists that the students choose good, challenging material to read. Another teacher felt it is most important not to make a value judgement on the students' choices of material. Several teachers reported using games, visual aids and puzzles to develop the students' vocabularies. As with the pre-nine class, the students do a lot of reading -- silently, aloud and together. They are expected to complete comprehension assignments, tell or rewrite material in their own words and to understand such things as artistic interpretation. The students are allowed to proceed at their own rate and are helped on a one-to-one basis when they are ready.

Most of the teachers deal with reading and writing together, although one teacher explained that it is important to keep the reading and writing activities separate, claiming it is essential that the students write about their own experiences. Most felt that the technical aspects of writing should be taken up on a secondary basis and that it is important to stress the flow and creative aspects of the writing activity first. However, they thought the technical aspects should be handled as soon as possible when they come up or when the student asks for help. The pre-nine students begin by writing short sentences with their existing vocabulary and are slowly led into writing longer sentences, paragraphs, stories etc. as their vocabulary increases. The students in the

regular class, in addition to their usual writing activities, are also required to keep a "journal" and to write two pages a week on a topic of their choice for that journal. They do not have to show the journal writing to their teachers but can keep it confidential.

When the teachers were asked what things had proven to be unsuccessful in teaching CONTACT students to read and write, they mentioned several ideas: (1) long pieces of work, (2) books with small print, (3) material which is too easy or too difficult, (4) copying from a book as a way to learn how to write, (5) assigning work without one-to-one interaction, guidance and direction, and (6) a formal approach to teaching vowels, diphthongs, punctuation, grammar, etc.

There were a few things the teachers suggested they would like to try to teach reading and writing, but had not had the chance: (1) a library clipping service, (2) library searches for preparing essays, (3) group activity, (4) backing up the individual approach with professionally prepared materials in areas such as phonics, (5) machines or reading laboratories, (6) the rotary method so that the teachers who were best at teaching reading and writing taught everyone.

The Students' Opinions About Reading and Writing. The students\* were asked to rate their progress in reading and writing while at CONTACT School. The majority (68% for reading and 72% for writing) reported that they had improved a little or a lot. Approximately a third in each case felt they had improved a lot. The data are shown in Tables 15 and 19.

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\* The students whose opinions are reported in this section include students who left within five months of enrolling in CONTACT and students who remained for five or more months (25 of the former and 73 of the latter).

The reason the students most frequently gave for having improved in their reading and writing was that they had done a lot of both (see Tables 16 and 20). They also frequently cited individualization, work on fundamentals, freedom of choice and expression, constructive criticism, teacher guidance and the nature of the assignments as reasons for improvement.

Of the smaller number of students who believed they had regressed or stayed the same in their reading and writing, only a handful blamed it on the school's program. As Tables 17 and 21 indicate, they either felt their skills were all right to begin with or they reported a lack of interest, ability and/or application.

The majority of the students (see Tables 18 and 22) did not give suggestions for improvement. Those who did, gave a wide variety of responses, none of which was offered by more than a few of the students.

TABLE 15

THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON HOW MUCH  
THEY HAD IMPROVED IN THEIR READING  
(N=98)

Students' Opinions	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
I am not as good as I used to be	3	3.1%
I have stayed the same	27	27.6%
I have improved a little	35	35.7%
I have improved a lot	32	32.7%
I don't know	1	1.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 16

REASONS STUDENTS BELIEVED THEY HAD IMPROVED A LOT  
OR A LITTLE IN THEIR READING  
(N=67)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Did a lot of reading	35	52.2%
Individual program/attention/encouragement	20	29.9%
Work on pronunciation/speed/ phonics/ spelling/etc.	16	23.9%
Nature of assignments (book reports, comprehensions, etc.)	15	22.4%
More interested	9	13.4%
Oral reading	3	4.5%
Freedom of choice/expression	3	4.5%
Miscellaneous	7	10.4%
No Response	2	3.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 17

REASONS STUDENTS BELIEVED THEY HAD REGRESSED  
OR HAD STAYED THE SAME IN THEIR READING  
(N=30)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Reading was O.K. before	9	30.0%
Lack of Interest/Ability	8	26.7%
Inadequate program	6	20.0%
Absenteeism/did not work/no self-discipline	5	16.7%
Miscellaneous	3	10.0%
No Response	5	16.7%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 18

OTHER THINGS STUDENTS BELIEVED WOULD HELP THEM  
IMPROVE IN THEIR READING  
(N=98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
More structure in program/more emphasis on fundamentals/different teaching methods	13	13.3%
More different/better reading material	10	10.2%
More challenging/interesting topics	8	8.2%
More reading practice	6	6.1%
More student-teacher interaction	5	5.1%
More self-discipline	5	5.1%
Miscellaneous	7	7.1%
Don't know/no answer/irrelevant answer	57	58.2%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one suggestion.

TABLE 19

THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON HOW MUCH THEY HAD IMPROVED IN THEIR WRITING  
(N=98)

Students' Opinions	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
I am not as good as I used to be	2	2.0%
I have stayed the same	23	23.5%
I have improved a little	36	36.7%
I have improved a lot	35	35.7%
I don't know	2	2.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 20

REASONS STUDENTS BELIEVED THEY HAD IMPROVED A LOT  
OR A LITTLE IN THEIR WRITING  
(N=71)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Did a lot of writing (journals, poetry, song lyrics, creative writing, etc.)	34	47.9%
Individual program/freedom of choice and expression	17	23.9%
Constructive criticism/teacher guidance	16	22.5%
Work on fundamentals (grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence and paragraph construction, etc.)	15	21.1%
Miscellaneous	5	7.0%
Don't know/no answer/irrelevant answer	7	9.9%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 21

REASONS STUDENTS BELIEVED THEY HAD REGRESSED OR HAD STAYED THE SAME IN THEIR WRITING  
(N = 25)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Lack of interest/ability	7	28.0%
Absenteeism/did not work/no self-discipline	6	24.0%
Inadequate program	2	8.0%
Writing was O.K. before	2	8.0%
Miscellaneous	2	8.0%
Don't know/no answer/irrelevant answer	10	40.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one answer.

TABLE 22

OTHER THINGS STUDENTS BELIEVED WOULD HELP THEM IMPROVE  
IN THEIR WRITING (N = 98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
More writing	11	11.2%
More work on fundamentals (grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence and paragraph construction, etc.)	8	8.2%
More interesting/challenging work	4	4.1%
More student-teacher interaction	4	4.1%
More individual study	4	4.1%
Miscellaneous	6	6.1%
Don't know/no answer/irrelevant answer	64	65.3%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one suggestion.

The Results of the Standardized Testing. The data in Tables 23 and 24 illustrate that the CONTACT students differ greatly in their vocabulary and reading comprehension skills as measured by the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills. The range of grade equivalent scores for vocabulary is Grade 2 to Grade 12, while the range for reading comprehension is Grade 1 to Grade 11. The mean scores for both are at the grade seven level with the mean for vocabulary being slightly higher than that for reading comprehension. The reader should recall while examining these scores that the students may have just been put on the rolls of CONTACT or may have been enrolled for up to several years at the time of the pre-testing.

Two steps involving statistical tests were taken in order to determine whether students improve in their vocabulary and reading comprehension as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the students who were pre-tested

TABLE 23

RESULTS OF THE CTBS VOCABULARY PRE-TEST\*  
(N=94)

Grade Equivalent Scores	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
0 - 1.9	-	-
2.0 - 2.9	2	2.1%
3.0 - 3.9	4	4.3%
4.0 - 4.9	4	4.3%
5.0 - 5.9	14	14.9%
6.0 - 6.9	10	10.6%
7.0 - 7.9	10	10.6%
8.0 - 8.9	13	13.8%
9.0 - 9.9	21	22.3%
10.0 - 10.9	11	11.7%
11.0 - 11.9	3	3.2%
12.0 - 12.9	2	2.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>MEAN = 7.8</b>		

\* These scores are for students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls.

TABLE 24

RESULTS OF THE CTBS READING COMPREHENSION PRE-TEST\*  
(N=83)

Grade Equivalent Scores	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
0 - 1.9	1	1.2%
2.0 - 2.9	2	2.4%
3.0 - 3.9	1	1.2%
4.0 - 4.9	8	9.6%
5.0 - 5.9	11	13.3%
6.0 - 6.9	8	9.6%
7.0 - 7.9	13	15.7%
8.0 - 8.9	18	21.7%
9.0 - 9.9	14	16.9%
10.0 - 10.9	6	7.2%
11.0 - 11.9	1	1.2%
12.0 - 12.9	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>MEAN = 7.4</b>		

\* These scores are for students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls.

were divided into two groups -- those who had been in CONTACT for less than five months and those who had remained for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for both CTBS tests for both groups and two-tailed t-tests for independent samples were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that the differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*

The means and standard deviations for the vocabulary test grade-equivalent scores are as follows:

	<u>Attended Less Than</u> <u>Five Months</u>	<u>Attended Five Or</u> <u>More Months</u>
Number of Students .....	65	17
Mean .....	7.65	8.16
Standard Deviation .....	2.25	2.58

While the mean of the scores for those students who had attended CONTACT five or more months is one half a grade level higher than for those who had attended less than five months, the difference is not statistically significant.

The means and standard deviations for the reading comprehension test grade-equivalent scores are as follows:

	<u>Attended Less Than</u> <u>Five Months</u>	<u>Attended Five Or</u> <u>More Months</u>
Number of Students .....	59	15
Mean .....	7.26	7.77
Standard Deviation .....	2.14	1.83

\* Since the samples were not randomly selected from the populations of two groups of students with those characteristics (such selection is impossible in a study of this nature), the results of the t-tests are only valid for those students actually tested and cannot be generalized to other students with similar characteristics.

Again, while the mean of the scores for those students who had attended CONTACT five or more months is one-half a grade level higher than for those who had attended less than five months, the difference is not statistically significant.

The second step involved post-testing those students who were still available during April 1979 and had remained on the rolls for at least five months. Their pre-test and post-test scores along with the amount of change in their scores are given in Tables 25 and 26. Two-tailed t-tests for dependent samples were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that the differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*

While the mean for the vocabulary post-test scores is 0.4 grade levels higher than the mean for the vocabulary pre-test scores for 20 students, the difference is not statistically significant.

However, the mean for the reading comprehension post-test scores which is 0.9 grade levels higher than the mean for the pre-test scores for 15 students is statistically significant.

It was intended to have the students submit a piece of writing on a pre-post basis. So few students participated on a pre-test basis that the investigators decided not to try to collect post-test pieces of writing..

#### Mathematics

The teachers' description of how mathematics is taught. The CONTACT teachers expressed more concern about teaching mathematics than reading and writing. Several matters troubled either a few or all the teachers. First, it is often difficult to ascertain why one should teach dropout students mathematics or what one should teach them. What mathematics do the students need to know

\* As before, the results cannot be generalized beyond the students actually tested.

TABLE 25

CHANGES IN THE CTBS VOCABULARY SCORES  
(N=20)

Student	Grade	Grade	Change
	Equivalent Scores Pre-Test	Equivalent Scores Post-Test	
A	5.4	7.8	+2.4
B	7.7	9.7	+2.0
C	6.3	7.8	+1.5
*D	3.5	4.8	+1.3
*E	9.0	9.9	+0.9
F	7.7	8.6	+0.9
G	10.0	10.8	+0.8
*H	8.9	9.7	+0.8
I	8.6	9.1	+0.5
*J	8.3	8.7	+0.4
*K	6.6	6.9	+0.3
L	4.8	5.1	+0.3
*M	7.9	8.1	+0.2
N	8.5	8.6	+0.1
O	5.1	5.2	+0.1
P	12.2	12.2	+0.0
*Q	7.3	7.1	-0.2
*R	6.9	6.7	-0.2
S	2.7	2.4	-0.3
T	6.6	3.5	-3.1
MEAN	7.2	7.6	+0.4

\* Students were post-tested during April 1979. Those students marked with a star were pre-tested during January 1978 while all others were pre-tested during October 1978.

TABLE 26

CHANGES IN THE CTBS READING COMPREHENSION SCORES  
(N=15)

Student	Grade	Grade	Change
	Equivalent Scores Pre-Test	Equivalent Scores Post-Test	
A	6.9	9.2	+2.3
*B	5.4	7.5	+2.1
C	5.5	7.4	+1.9
D	10.9	12.5	+1.6
*E	7.4	8.7	+1.3
F	4.9	5.9	+1.0
G	1.9	2.9	+1.0
H	7.9	8.9	+1.0
*I	7.9	8.9	+1.0
J	4.8	5.6	+0.8
K	6.1	6.7	+0.6
L	7.5	8.0	+0.5
*M	7.2	7.4	+0.2
N	9.7	9.5	-0.2
*O	5.9	5.2	-0.7
MEAN	6.7	7.6	+0.9

\* Students were post-tested during April 1979. Those students marked with a star were pre-tested during January 1978 while all others were pre-tested during October 1978.

and what do they want to know? The second point many teachers made, which is probably closely related to the first, was that it is not easy to make the learning of mathematics relevant to the students' lives. One teacher strongly expressed the opinion that it is silly to teach mathematics with a view to strengthening the mind and not to be concerned with how the student can use it. A couple of other teachers believed the solution lay in teaching more business mathematics and incorporating work related to keeping personal budgets, records, income tax, mortgages, etc. Others spoke of needing a more interdisciplinary approach, while at least one teacher talked about getting the students involved in mathematics outside the classroom. Thirdly, it is troublesome to diagnose where a student is at mathematically. One teacher described it as "a shot in the dark" and explained that the students don't know what they can do mathematically. They almost never do mathematics outside of school, thus a teacher cannot profitably ask -- for diagnostic purposes -- what kind of math the student does and/or is interested in. In addition, the same teacher said, "It means nothing to know that a student passed grade nine math three years ago with a mark of 55." Still another teacher questioned the use of standardized or other formal tests as reliable diagnostic tools suggesting that the results of such tests may not identify the real problem (e.g., a low self-concept). Fourthly, the teachers expressed confusion about what to do with young people who have really "turned off on" mathematics and strongly resist any approach the teacher might try. The data presented later in this section indicate that some students are, in fact, simply not interested and the investigators also experienced more student resistance with respect to administering the mathematics tests than the reading tests. Finally, several teachers felt unqualified to teach mathematics at or above the grade nine level and this created a dilemma since the original philosophy of the school was to have each teacher instruct in both reading and mathematics.

The most distinctive feature of CONTACT School's approach to teaching mathematics is the individualization. As one teacher put it, "To teach mathematics, one must have one-to-one interaction." While several teachers wished it were possible to do more group work and one thought mathematics should be taught as group problem solving, the program has remained highly individualized.

As soon as a student enters CONTACT, the teachers attempt to diagnose the student's mathematics skills (in spite of the difficulties referred to above). They do not use sophisticated diagnostic techniques. Some use simple pre-nine and grade nine math tests, some use specific assignments, some ask about the students' previous math achievements and most try to get to know the students so well that such things as low self-concepts related to math skills can be detected.

If it is determined that the student should be placed at a pre-nine or grade nine level, he or she is then started on a program designed by a mathematics specialist who was on their staff for a year. The specially prepared program is composed of worksheets designed according to the Ministry guidelines which the students complete in small units. The students are tested at the end of each unit. If they obtain at least 70%, they may go to the next unit. If they obtain less, they are required to repeat all or a part of the unit. The worksheets are designed to reinforce the students' reading -- they must read to figure out what to do and what it means. As the students progress through the units, they receive a great deal of individual help. Drill and memorization using flash cards, etc. are employed to build skills such as the multiplication tables. The teachers talked of the importance of marking immediately, providing chances for review, teaching one concept at a time and constantly encouraging the students while at the same time allowing them to proceed at their own pace. The teachers felt that the worksheets worked for most of the students at the pre-nine and grade nine levels.

The other students were studying math as high as grade 12, level 4 and were using the materials normally used in other Toronto Secondary Schools.

The specialist was hired to relieve the teachers of having to deal with planning a math program and of teaching at levels above which they felt competent. The program which was designed does not go higher than grade nine. A math specialist has been on staff ever since. During the first year of this study, the math specialist rotated from class to class using the specially prepared program to teach the pre-nine and grade nine students and using the regular Toronto Board of Education high school math program for the students studying at higher levels. For the second year of the study, the specialist used the same programs, still on an individual basis, but had the senior students come to him as a class. For both years, the other teachers helped with the pre-nine and grade nine students by using the specially prepared program.

The teachers listed a variety of things they had tried unsuccessfully in order to teach CONTACT students mathematics:

- (1) Movies and models
- (2) Individualization becomes difficult when a teacher has over eight students to teach
- (3) Peer tutoring
- (4) Sophisticated approaches to evaluation and diagnosis
- (5) Group lessons and/or work are ineffective because students have a wide variety of skills and some do not attend regularly
- (6) Assignments or lessons which require a long attention span
- (7) Leaving the students alone.

Some of the things the teachers wished they could do or have were:

- (1) Worksheets designed for business mathematics
- (2) More modern business mathematics textbooks
- (3) Step-by-step answer books
- (4) A more interdisciplinary approach
- (5) More relevant math materials
- (6) More group problem solving and/or review.

The students' opinions about mathematics. Approximately half of the 98 students who were interviewed believed they had improved a little or a lot in mathematics (see Table 27) and they mostly attributed their improvement to individual attention, the study of a variety of topics and good teaching (see Table 28).

The data in Table 29 indicate that very few of the students who believed they had regressed or stayed the same in mathematics blamed the school program or the teaching. They mostly said they weren't interested, didn't like it or never did it.

The suggestions for improvement given by 38% of the interviewed students are tabulated in Table 30. The responses suggest that the students may need even more individual attention and time to spend on mathematics and perhaps a different program and materials. However, the majority of the students gave no suggestions for improvement.

TABLE 27

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON HOW MUCH THEY HAD IMPROVED IN THEIR MATHEMATICS  
(N=98)

Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
I am not as good as I used to be	13	13.3%
I have stayed the same	31	31.6%
I have improved a little	24	24.5%
I have improved a lot	28	28.6%
Don't know	2	2.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 28

REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING A LITTLE OR A LOT IN THEIR MATHEMATICS  
(N=52)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Individual attention	17	32.7%
Did a variety of topics	15	28.8%
Teacher explained it well	8	15.4%
Work at own pace	2	3.8%
Miscellaneous	8	15.4%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant answer	7	13.5%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 29

REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR REGRESSING OR STAYING THE SAME IN THEIR MATHEMATICS  
(N=44)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Not interested/don't like it	19	43.2%
Haven't done any	10	22.7%
Program/teacher unsuitable	5	11.4%
Not enough help/individual attention	3	6.8%
Doing review work	3	6.8%
I was always good at it	3	6.8%
Miscellaneous	2	4.5%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant answer	3	6.8%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

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TABLE 30

OTHER THINGS STUDENTS BELIEVED WOULD HELP THEM IMPROVE IN THEIR MATHEMATICS  
(N=98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
More individual attention/class too large/ need more than one math teacher	14	14.3%
Different program/better materials	12	12.2%
A different teacher	6	6.1%
More practice	3	3.1%
Miscellaneous	2	2.0%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	61	62.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results of the standardized testing. The numbers of students who completed the mathematics pre-tests and post-tests are smaller than for the reading tests because the students resisted more. Several students said they had not been doing mathematics or disliked the tests. The pre-test grade equivalent scores for the mathematics concepts and mathematics problem solving CTBS tests are shown in Tables 31 and 32. The mean scores are approximately a grade level lower than the vocabulary and reading comprehension mean scores, although the range of scores is as wide.

Two steps involving statistical tests were taken in order to determine whether students improve in their mathematics as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the students who were pre-tested were divided into two groups -- those who had been in CONTACT for less than five months and those who had remained for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for both CTBS mathematics tests for both groups and two-tailed t-tests for in-

TABLE 31

RESULTS OF THE CTBS MATHEMATICS CONCEPTS PRE-TEST  
(N=80) \*

Grade Equivalent Scores	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
2.0 - 2.9	4	5.0%
3.0 - 3.9	8	10.0%
4.0 - 4.9	11	13.8%
5.0 - 5.9	14	17.5%
6.0 - 6.9	13	16.3%
7.0 - 7.9	14	17.5%
8.0 - 8.9	5	6.3%
9.0 - 9.9	8	10.0%
10.0 - 10.9	2	2.5%
11.0 - 11.9	1	1.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>MEAN = 6.2</b>		

\* These scores are for students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls

TABLE 32

RESULTS OF THE CTBS MATHEMATICS PROBLEM SOLVING PRE-TEST  
(N=82) \*

Grade Equivalent Scores	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
2.0 - 2.9	3	3.7%
3.0 - 3.9	6	7.3%
4.0 - 4.9	7	8.5%
5.0 - 5.9	11	13.4%
6.0 - 6.9	15	18.3%
7.0 - 7.9	9	11.0%
8.0 - 8.9	19	23.2%
9.0 - 9.9	8	9.8%
10.0 - 10.9	2	2.4%
11.0 - 11.9	2	2.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>MEAN = 6.9</b>		

\* These scores are for students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls.

dependent samples were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that the differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*

The means and standard deviations for the mathematics concepts test grade-equivalent scores are as follows:

	Attended Less Than Five Months	Attended Five Or More Months
Number of Students	53	20
Mean	6.51	5.63
Standard Deviation	1.95	2.22

While the mean of the scores for those students who had attended CONTACT five or more months is lower than for those who had attended less than five months, the difference is not statistically significant.

The means and standard deviations for the mathematics problem solving test grade-equivalent scores are as follows:

	Attended Less Than Five Months	Attended Five Or More Months
Number of Students	54	21
Mean	7.14	6.39
Standard Deviation	2.01	2.56

Again, while the mean of the scores for those students who had attended CONTACT five or more months is lower than for those students who had attended less than five months, the difference is not statistically significant.

The second step involved post-testing those students who were still available during April 1979 and had remained on the rolls for at least five months.

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\* The results cannot be generalized beyond the students actually tested.

Their pre-test and post-test scores along with the amount of change in their scores are given in Tables 33 and 34. Two-tailed t-tests for dependent samples were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that the differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*

While the mean for the mathematics concepts post-test scores is 0.3 grade levels higher than the mean for the mathematics concepts pre-test scores for 12 students, the difference is not statistically significant.

And, while the mean for the mathematics problem solving post-test scores is 0.7 grade levels higher than the mean for the mathematics problem-solving pre-test scores for 11 students, the difference is not statistically significant.

#### Summary and Discussion

Reading and Writing. The majority of the 98 students who were interviewed felt they had improved a little or a lot in their reading and writing -- 68% for reading and 72% for writing -- while attending CONTACT School.

CTBS vocabulary and reading comprehension tests were used on a pre-post basis to determine if students improved after attending CONTACT for at least five months. For a small sample of 15 students, it was found that their post-test reading comprehension scores were statistically higher than their pre-test scores -- 12 of the 15 students had improved at least half a grade level. No statistical difference was found for the vocabulary scores for 20 students.

No test data were available for writing.

It seems fair, then, to conclude that for students who remain in CONTACT for at least five months, the School's approach to teaching dropout students reading and perhaps writing is fairly successful. The most distinctive features of the approach from the teachers' point of view are:

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\* As before, the results cannot be generalized beyond the students actually tested.

"I pronounce words properly now. I read faster now and I think while I read."

"I couldn't read out loud -- I am much better now. They get you to read out loud -- I am not afraid now."

"I am reading harder books. I am trying more."

"I can now write a full page story. We do lots of writing."

"I improved a lot because of the journals and creative writing. I did a lot of writing."

"Everyday we wrote a journal so I got better. I wrote poetry too."

"They give you the time to write -- the teacher goes over it individually."

"Because of the individual study program. I write on topics I am interested in. I do independent work."

"They helped me write a letter to my mother for the first time."

"The teacher goes over everything in great detail."

"I caught on to punctuation."

"My teacher encourages me to correct mistakes and do it over. He points out my mistakes a lot."

"The assignments are corrected. Now I know how not to make mistakes. I am shown what I am doing wrong."

#### Mathematics

Approximately half (53%) of the 98 students interviewed felt they had improved a little or a lot in mathematics while attending CONTACT.

CTBS mathematics concepts and mathematics problem solving tests were used on a pre-post basis to determine if students improved after attending CONTACT for at least five months. No statistically significant differences were found.

It seems reasonable to conclude that CONTACT is less successful in teaching the students mathematics than it is in teaching them reading and writing. The teachers' comments about and descriptions of the program are very interesting. The program is completely individualized and at the pre-nine and grade nine levels comprises a series of worksheets which the students do in small units. The students studying above grade nine follow the regular Toronto Board of Education math program. Drill, memorization, encouragement, immediate marking, review and learning one concept at a time are the methods they believe in. The worksheets are also designed to improve the students' reading skills as related to math.

However, the teachers had several concerns: it is difficult to make math interesting and relevant; it is not easy to diagnose where a student is at; some students hate math and refuse all attempts made by the teachers; and, not all teachers feel comfortable teaching high school math.

The students who felt they had improved in mathematics (53%) attributed their progress mostly to individual attention, doing a variety of topics, and good teaching. Here are some of the positive remarks made by the students:

"The teacher was right there -- individual attention. Instead of the blackboard, the teacher worked with you."

"I never did any mathematics in the other school. Here, I am more relaxed and I do it on my own."

"I finally got attention and individual help."

"I memorized the timetables and practised fractions. I improved most in reducing fractions."

"I did not know algebra. Now I know it and am very interested in it."

"The teacher explained it -- didn't say just do it."

"I was behind in math when I came. I can do it like nothing now. I understand it more with the teacher's help."

The other students attributed their lack of progress to no interest, dislike of math, not doing it, and the program or teacher. Here are some of their remarks:

"I refuse all help. I hate math. I have no patience with it."

"I don't like math. I have lost interest."

"I never had a taste for math. I can't understand it. The terms are too sophisticated."

"I didn't do it. I don't need math. I wasn't failing in math before."

"I haven't done any. I don't like the system. It's not organized. They need new math teachers."

"Only one math teacher -- not enough time."

"I didn't like the teacher -- couldn't explain things. I didn't like math."

#### Social Skills

The teachers' description of how CONTACT School helps students with their social skills. The teachers were asked to describe how CONTACT School attempts to help students with their social skills. In order to help them structure their responses, they were asked to comment, in particular, on (1) self-concept, (2) getting along with others, (3) self-discipline and (4) responsibility. They were also asked to talk about improvements they would like to see with respect to the school dealing with social skills and to try to pin-point the ways in which CONTACT is most successful.

During the two-year span of this study, CONTACT did not have a distinct program directed at the improvement of the students' social skills. That is, there was no course, no special time allotment devoted to the subject, or no carefully defined philosophy the teachers could use to guide them in their interactions with the students. For a couple of years at the beginning of CONTACT's

existence as an alternative school, they dealt with the subject for a short while each morning (between English and mathematics) by having the students participate in open discussions, role playing, sensitivity and creative exercises, etc. concerning their feelings and problems. The session was referred to as "GROUP". This approach was abandoned because: (1) some teachers felt uncomfortable with the approach and (2) some teachers did not want to do it because they felt that improvement in social skills could not be achieved in a vacuum or isolated from other things.

The teachers thus described their approach to the social skills area by offering - in terms of all nine teachers interviewed -- a rather large collection of beliefs they tried to adhere to in their attempt to help the students. Some teachers felt CONTACT did a good job in this area, others thought not and others said they didn't know. One teacher who felt they were not successful believed it was because the teachers lack motivation, interest, time and ability. Another said the kids don't improve because of the gap between theory and reality. Two other teachers believed CONTACT did very well in the area of social skills.

Self-worth. The teachers were not in agreement on how to develop a student's self-worth. Some (probably the majority) felt that self-worth would improve only as the student experienced academic success or was able to set and achieve goals. At least one teacher felt the academic success must be in the area of basic skills. Another teacher felt that it is more than just poor performance in the basic skills which leads to a poor self-concept. That teacher first concentrated on giving the student a feeling of belonging to the group, after which he pursued the teaching of the academic skills. Some additional ideas the teachers had were:

- Be open and honest with the students. Don't delude them. Praise them only when it is deserved.
- Encourage the students. Let them know how and when they improve.

- Encourage participation in group decision making. Encourage them to participate in the general meeting. Encourage group discussion.
- Deal with the students as people. The staff should deal with the students in the same way they deal with each other.
- Try to avoid labelling the students. Let them know that low skills do not mean they are stupid. Avoid competition to prove smartness.
- Make students be accountable and honest.
- Work individually with them.
- Force the students to make decisions. (This is difficult because there aren't many options for these students in our society.)
- Let the students know they are "valuable" even though they may be doing negative things.
- Encourage a sense of collectivity -- that is, help them to realize that their problems are not unique.
- Encourage oral and written self-expression.
- Help the students feel they have a chance to do something for themselves.
- Since social problems account for many of their individual problems, the students must be provided a framework for understanding their position in society.

Getting along with others. The teachers' comments seemed to fall into three categories. First, they felt the general characteristics of the school probably help the students learn to get along with others. The school is small, open and relaxed. The relaxed atmosphere, some felt, reduces the number of fights the students get into; while the smallness and openness means the students are "on" every minute of the day and consequently must get along just to survive. They also felt the school trips are instrumental in helping the students learn to get along. Secondly, the students are homogeneous with respect to culture and social background and share a similar kind of commitment to the school; if a student is obviously quite different and fails to learn to get along, the student body may "drum" him or her out -- it is a matter of get

along or be ostracized. One teacher felt that this was quite typical of small alternative schools and may, in a way, be unfortunate because of the difficulties the new and young students experience as a consequence. Thirdly, the teachers play an important part. They serve as role models; that is, the students learn to get along by watching the teachers interact with others. Also, the staff intervene to help the students change undesirable behavior. They confront the students when they aren't getting along, not through a principal as other schools might, but as an entire staff. They monitor the students' behavior in class by leading them to see that it is important to share, to listen to others, to respect the opinions of others, not to interrupt, to take turns, to be fair, and not to dominate. At times, they intervene like judges or give students feedback on how they are relating to others in a group.

One teacher felt differently and said that the amount of leniency within CONTACT hinders the students' chances for learning to get along with others.

Self-discipline. Most teachers directly or indirectly referred to the school's philosophy of individualization and working at your own rate as that which improves the students' self-discipline. The students are encouraged to internalize the responsibility for what they learn, not to make excuses, to think about where to place the blame if they don't learn, to make decisions about what to learn and to do good work. They try to make the students realize that the teachers are only there to guide, help set goals, motivate and explain, and that they cannot actually do the students' learning. A few teachers felt the development of self-discipline goes hand-in-hand with the development of self-worth. One teacher emphasized the importance of establishing a bond with each student.

A couple of teachers thought that the students were not developing enough self-discipline while one teacher stated that they would only get worse at CONTACT if they entered without self-discipline.

Responsibility. Much of what the teachers had to say about self-discipline also applied to responsibility. One teacher commented on the few "formal positions" at CONTACT which offer students a chance to be responsible but added that the structure and philosophy of the school demanded a sort of day-to-day responsibility. Another teacher believed that the decision-making at the general meetings and the judiciary committee provided the students with a framework for becoming responsible.

One teacher felt that the students do not develop in this area because they are not held responsible for their actions.

The teachers were asked which of "self-worth," "getting along with others," "self-discipline," and "responsibility," the school had the most success in helping the students. They seemed to generally agree in naming "self-worth" and "getting along with others." One teacher felt they were least successful in teaching the students to tolerate others. Another teacher felt that the four areas reinforced each other; that is, if a student became more responsible, he probably improved in his self-worth, etc. Because of this, the different philosophies or different approaches adhered to by the various teachers, he felt, probably helped, instead of hindered, the students' development and was probably very realistic.

Finally, the teachers were asked to describe their most effective methods and to suggest ideas for improvement. The staff members were split on their philosophies, were aware of the split and, in addition, disagreed on whether the split was advantageous to the students' development in the area of social skills.

\* Every week there is a General Meeting involving the entire school body at which the students are involved in making decisions about discipline, in planning after-school activities and trips, and in making recommendations on programs. Students take turns chairing the meetings. There is also a Judiciary Committee to make rulings on the conduct of students.

One group of teachers believed that the development of social skills should be the "hidden agenda" of the entire program at CONTACT. These teachers talked about the importance of the staff members being models, of allowing the students to participate in decision making and of laying the ground-work for participation through the general meetings. These teachers felt the topic could not be dealt with as a separate and distinct issue; whereas, the other teachers favoured a course or a special session such as the "GROUP".

Some suggestions for improvement were:

- more extra-curricular activities such as sports and music;
- more involvement with the community -- the students should be working for half a day;
- students should be encouraged to participate more in the general meetings, the judiciary committee and the newspaper;
- the school should expect more tolerance from students; and
- the curriculum should be improved.

The students' opinions about their social skills. The 98 students who were interviewed were asked to rate how CONTACT had affected their self-confidence, their ability to get along with others and their self-discipline.

The percentages of students which gave each response for each concept are shown in Table 35. The majority of the students reported that they had improved a little or a lot in their self-confidence and ability to get along with others -- 65% for the former and 66% for the latter. Fewer students (49%) felt they had improved a little or a lot in their self-discipline.

As the figures in Table 36 indicate, the students who felt they had improved in their self-confidence were most likely to attribute that gain to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere, the freedom of expression and the attitudes of the teachers. It is interesting to note that very few associated it with a sense of accomplishment, even though many had reported that they had improved in the basic academic skills. Of those who felt they had not improved, very few blamed the school, the program or the teachers (see Table 37). And, as

TABLE 35

THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT HOW CONTACT HAD AFFECTED THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS  
(N=98)

	Self-Confidence	Getting Along With Others	Self-Discipline
CONTACT has made things worse	6.1%	2.0%	11.2%
CONTACT has made no difference	27.6%	30.6%	39.8%
CONTACT has helped me a little	28.6%	25.5%	27.6%
CONTACT has helped me a lot	36.7%	40.8%	21.4%
Don't Know	1.0%	1.0%	-
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 36

THE REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING A LITTLE OR A LOT  
IN THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE  
(N=64)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Relaxed and friendly atmosphere/ freedom of expression	33	51.6%
Teachers' attitudes/teachers like the kids	26	40.6%
Sense of accomplishment	7	10.9%
Feeling of importance/more responsibility	7	10.9%
I am better at speaking in front of a group	5	7.8%
I understand myself better	4	6.3%
Experience with different kinds of people	2	3.1%
Miscellaneous	1	1.6%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	2	3.1%

\*This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

displayed in Table 38, very few of the 98 students interviewed had suggestions for improvement in that area.

By far the most frequent reason the students gave for improving in their ability to get along with others was the small body of friendly students who had similar problems, thus making the student body seem like a family. The students also frequently mentioned the attitudes and characteristics of the teachers as well as their improved understanding of human nature (themselves and others). These results are given in Table 39. Again, as Tables 40 and 41 indicate, very few students had suggestions for improvement and very few students blamed the school program or teachers for their lack of improvement. A few claimed that the characteristics of some students produced difficulties.

The students who felt they had improved in their self-discipline (see Table 42) mostly said it was because they were encouraged to improve, they liked CONTACT and that the freedom promoted such development. However, the information in Tables 43 and 44 suggests that a segment of the student body (about 25%) wanted more discipline, structure, challenge and pressure to help them improve in the area of self-discipline. Others felt that the school couldn't help and that it was up to each individual.

#### The Results of the Rating Scales

##### 1. The IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory

Usable IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory data were obtained from 96 students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls of CONTACT School.

Similar IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory data were also collected for another study about the Toronto Board of Education "Leaving School Early" (L.S.E.) students (Larter and Eason, 1978). That study was about fourteen and fifteen-year-old students who are legally allowed (according to Ontario Regulation 159/75 - Early School Leaving) to leave school under the age of sixteen and get a job while remaining on the school rolls. That study also included

TABLE 37

REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR REGRESSING OR STAYING THE SAME  
IN THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE  
(N=33)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Just not confident/haven't changed	6	18.2%
Have always been confident	5	15.2%
I am adjusting to school/doing basic upgrading	4	12.1%
Teachers/program unsuitable	4	12.1%
Atmosphere too aggressive	2	6.1%
Discipline problems/kids in trouble	2	6.1%
Miscellaneous	3	9.1%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	12	36.4%

\*This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 38

SUGGESTIONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE  
(N=98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Different kind of teaching (more discussion, more individualization),	8	8.2%
More student effort	7	7.1%
More structured program	5	5.1%
More discipline	2	2.0%
Improve academic ability	2	2.0%
Miscellaneous	1	1.0%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	73	74.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 39

THE REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING A LITTLE OR A LOT  
IN THEIR ABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS  
(N=65)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Students are friendly/few in number/ like a family/have similar problems	40	61.5%
Teachers are friendly/don't power-trip/ care/are concerned/are like people/go by first names	17	26.2%
Understand self and others better/not shy now/don't fight now/learned to communicate	12	18.5%
Atmosphere is open/no rush/no pressure	8	12.3%
Freedom of expression	6	9.2%
Miscellaneous/irrelevant response	9	13.8%
No response	13	20.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 40

THE REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR REGRESSING OR STAYING THE SAME  
IN THEIR ABILITY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS  
(N=32)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Always got along before	11	34.4%
Students are strange/weird/immature/bad influence/secretive/on drugs	7	21.9%
I am a loner	4	12.5%
I have my own friends outside school	3	9.4%
Teachers are bad/swear	2	6.3%
Miscellaneous	4	12.5%
Don't know/no response	5	15.6%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 41

SUGGESTIONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING THEIR ABILITY  
TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS  
\* (N=98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
More discipline/structure (fighting, dope, attendance)	7	7.1%
Students' attitudes/efforts/lifestyle/ intolerance/gossiping should be changed	7	7.1%
Teachers' attitudes/efforts/lifestyle should be changed	3	3.1%
More field trips/camps	2	2.0%
Miscellaneous	2	2.0%
Nothing	3	3.1%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	78	79.6%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students gave more than one suggestion.

TABLE 42

THE REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING A LITTLE OR A LOT  
IN THEIR SELF-DISCIPLINE  
(N=48)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Encouraged to improve attendance/ punctuality/effort	14	29.2%
Freedom brings self-discipline and responsibility	12	25.0%
Likes CONTACT (individual program, teachers)	11	22.9%
Comes from individual, not school	5	10.4%
Miscellaneous	5	10.4%
No response	3	6.3%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students gave more than one reason.

TABLE 43

THE REASONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR REGRESSING OR STAYING THE SAME  
IN THEIR SELF-DISCIPLINE  
(N=50)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
No pressure/challenge/discipline/structure/deadlines	13	26.0%
It is up to the individual	7	14.0%
I was okay before	5	10.0%
Unstable homelife	2	4.0%
I am a lost cause	2	4.0%
I dislike the school	2	4.0%
Miscellaneous	3	6.0%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	16	32.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 44

SUGGESTIONS STUDENTS GAVE FOR IMPROVING THEIR SELF-DISCIPLINE  
(N=98)

Suggestion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
More discipline/structure/strictness	23	23.5%
More motivation/positive reinforcement/understanding	6	6.1%
It is up to the individual	6	6.1%
Miscellaneous	9	9.2%
Nothing	5	5.1%
Don't know/no response/irrelevant response	53	54.1%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one reason.

a control group of randomly selected regular grade nine students. There were 103 L.S.E. students and 100 control students.

The means and standard deviations for the four self-concept subscales and the total score for the CONTACT students, the L.S.E. students and the control students are shown in Table 45.

TABLE 45

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE SELF-APPRAISAL INVENTORY FOR THE CONTACT STUDENTS, THE L.S.E. STUDENTS AND THE CONTROL STUDENTS

Scale	CONTACT Students (N=96)	L.S.E. Students (N=103)	Control Students (N=100)
Family - mean	11.35**	13.29*	15.04
standard deviation	4.95	3.87	3.36
Peer - mean	12.74**	14.33	13.86
standard deviation	3.50	3.22	3.95
School - mean	11.76**	8.97*	12.40
standard deviation	4.09	3.91	4.15
General - mean	14.05	14.35	14.75
standard deviation	3.89	3.30	3.73
Total - mean	49.91*	50.94*	56.05
- standard deviation	12.02	10.13	11.99

\* The mean is significantly different from the mean for the control group ( $p \leq .05$ ).

\*\* The mean for the CONTACT students is significantly different from the mean for the L.S.E. students ( $p \leq .05$ )

Five t-tests were previously performed (Larter and Eason, 1978) to test the hypotheses that the differences between the five sets of means for the L.S.E. students and the control students were equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they were different from zero. The hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. The hypothesis that the difference between the means was equal to zero was rejected for the total self-concept

scale, the family self-concept subscale and the school self-concept subscale.

The t-tests were two-tailed but an examination of the means revealed the direction of the significant differences. The L.S.E. students had significantly lower self-concept total scores, significantly lower family self-concept scores, and significantly lower school self-concept scores than the control students.

Similarly, for this study, five t-tests were performed to test the hypotheses that the differences between the five sets of means of the CONTACT students and the control students were equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they were different from zero. The hypotheses was tested at the .05 level of significance. The hypothesis that the difference between the means was equal to zero was rejected for the total self-concept scale, the family self-concept subscale and the peer self-concept s <sup>bscale</sup>. An inspection of the means revealed that the CONTACT students had significantly lower self-concept total scores, significantly lower family self-concept scores and significantly lower peer self-concept scores than the control students.

Finally, another set of five t-test's were performed to test the hypotheses that the differences between the five sets of means of the CONTACT students and the L.S.E. students were equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they were different from zero. The hypothesis was rejected for the family, peer and school subscales. An inspection of the means revealed that the CONTACT students had significantly lower family and peer self-concept scores and significantly higher school self-concept scores than the L.S.E. students.

It appears, then, that both the CONTACT students and the L.S.E. students have lower self-concepts than regular grade nine students. Both are lower on the dimension of family, the CONTACT students being even lower than the L.S.E. students. The L.S.E. students who have left school to work are lower on the

school dimension; whereas, the CONTACT students who have chosen to continue their schooling are the same on the dimension of schooling as the regular students. The CONTACT students are lower on the peer dimension than both the L.S.E. students and the control students.

CONTACT students feel less capable, significant, successful and worthy with respect to family and peers.

Two steps involving statistical tests were taken in order to determine whether students improve in their self-concept as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the students who were pre-tested were divided into two groups -- those who had been in CONTACT for less than five months and those who had remained for five or more months. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the total scores and the four subscale scores for both groups and two-tailed t-tests for independent samples were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that the differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*

The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 46. While the means for those students who had attended CONTACT for five or more months are slightly higher than for those students who had remained for less than five months, the differences are not statistically significant.

The second step involved post-testing those students who were still available during April 1979 and had remained on the rolls for at least five months. The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 47. Two-tailed t-tests for dependent samples (using difference scores) were done at the .05 level of significance to test the hypotheses that differences between the means are equal to zero against the alternative hypotheses that they are different from zero.\*\* None of the means are statistically different. That is, there

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\* The results cannot be generalized beyond the students actually tested.

\*\* The results cannot be generalized beyond the students actually tested.

TABLE 46

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE SELF-APPRAISAL INVENTORY FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN ENROLLED IN CONTACT FOR LESS THAN FIVE MONTHS AND FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN ENROLLED FOR FIVE OR MORE MONTHS\*

Scale	Students Who Attended Less Than Five Months (N = 73)	Students Who Attended Five Or More Months (N = 23)
Family - mean	10.85	12.96
Family - standard deviation	4.71	5.44
Peer - mean	12.55	13.35
Peer - standard deviation	3.47	3.61
School - mean	11.67	12.04
School - standard deviation	4.06	4.28
General - mean	13.78	14.91
General - standard deviation	3.64	4.56
TOTAL - mean	48.85	53.26
TOTAL - standard deviation	11.18	14.11

\* There are no significant differences between the means of the two groups ( $p \leq .05$ ).

TABLE 47

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE SELF-APPRAISAL INVENTORY FOR STUDENTS WHO WERE PRE-TESTED AND POST-TESTED (N = 22)\*

Scale	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Family - mean	11.82	13.27
Family - standard deviation	4.49	4.65
Peer - mean	13.05	13.23
Peer - standard deviation	3.12	4.36
School - mean	12.91	11.73
School - standard deviation	4.00	3.53
General - mean	14.59	14.05
General - standard deviation	3.29	3.55
TOTAL - mean	52.36	52.27
TOTAL - standard deviation	9.52	11.77

\* There are no significant differences between the pre-test and post-test means ( $p \leq .05$ ).

is no evidence that the group of 22 students had changed in their self-concept as a result of attending CONTACT for at least five months.

These findings suggest that the students' self-concepts as measured by the IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory do not change either for the better or for the worse while they remain at CONTACT. That is, they continue to have feelings of unworthiness about family and peers and their feelings about themselves as related to school remain as high as those of the control students and higher than those of the L.S.E. students who have left school.

## 2. The Teachers' Ratings of the Students' Social Skills

The teachers rated 76 of the students on the October 1978 rolls on their social skills; 21 of those students were rated again during the spring of 1979. The instrument is shown in Appendix M and the method used to calculate the students' scores is described on page 34.

Two steps involving statistical tests were taken to determine whether students change in their social skills as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the students who were pre-rated were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for five or more months and those who had attended for less than five months. Means and standard deviations for the students' scores were calculated as follows:

	Attended Less Than Five Months	Attended Five Or More Months
Number of Students.....	43	33
Mean.....	113.68	115.51
Standard deviation.....	12.85	12.12

A two-tailed t-test for independent samples was performed to test the hypothesis that the difference between the means is equal to zero against the alternative hypothesis that it is different from zero. The hypothesis which was tested at the .05 level of significance was not rejected. That is, the teachers

rated both groups of students much the same on their social skills (The results may not be generalized beyond the students rated).

Secondly, a t-test for dependent samples was performed to test the hypothesis that the difference between the means for the pre-ratings of 21 students and the post-ratings is equal to zero against the alternative hypothesis that it is different from zero. The pre-ratings, post-ratings and change in ratings for the 21 students are given in Table 48 along with the means and standard deviations. The hypothesis which was tested at the .05 level of significance was rejected. An examination of the means reveals that the post-ratings are lower than the pre-ratings. That is, for these 21 students, the teachers rated them lower on their social skills during the spring of 1979 than they had during the fall of 1978. However, the reliability of this result can be questioned. Since seven of the eight teachers rated the students during the fall and only four did so during the spring, the change in the ratings may be due to the difference in the number of teachers who participated and not due to a change in the students.

#### Summary and Discussion

A number of variables rather loosely categorized under the heading of "social skills" were investigated. The variable of "self-worth" (also referred to as self-concept, self-confidence and self-appraisal) was probably most thoroughly investigated. The other variables investigated were "getting along with others," "self-discipline" and "responsibility."

The data from the IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory indicated that CONTACT students score lower in terms of self-concept than a control group of regular grade nine students and that the lower scores are due to their feelings about family and peers and not to their feelings about their scholastic endeavors.

TABLE 48

TEACHERS' RATINGS OF STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS:  
PRE-RATINGS, POST-RATINGS AND CHANGE  
(N=21)

Student	Pre-Rating (Fall, 1978)	Post-Rating (Spring, 1979)	Change
a	117.2	121.3	+4.1
b	100.5	102.5	+2.0
c	118.5	119.4	+0.9
d	96.0	96.5	+0.5
e	116.0	116.0	0.0
f	101.7	99.9	-1.8
g	110.8	108.6	-2.2
h	125.3	120.8	-4.5
i	114.0	108.2	-5.8
j	121.0	114.3	-6.7
k	98.2	91.5	-6.7
l	105.2	97.5	-7.7
m	95.7	86.5	-9.2
n	126.5	116.0	-10.5
o	133.7	122.2	-11.5
p	106.8	94.7	-12.1
q	121.0	107.5	-13.5
r	137.0	122.0	-15.0
s	126.6	111.6	-15.0
t	137.0	119.5	-17.5
u	113.0	87.5	-25.5
MEAN	115.3	107.8	-7.5
STANDARD DEVIATION	13.0	11.9	

The IOX data also indicated that some students did not change in their self-appraisals either for the better or worse as a result of attending CONTACT for at least five months. These test results tie in rather interestingly with the opinions of the students and teachers. About half of the teachers and 65% of the students felt that CONTACT helped students to improve their self-concept. While the teachers could not agree as to whether or not improvement was to be achieved through academic success, the students who felt they had improved were more likely to attribute that improvement to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere, freedom of expression and teachers' attitudes than to a sense of accomplishment.

These findings strongly suggest that CONTACT students have low self-concepts because of family and peer relationships and that their self-concepts do not improve as a result of attending CONTACT for at least five months (the opinions of the students tended to be a bit more positive than the test data). While it is difficult for a school to do much in the area of family self-concept, perhaps a school such as CONTACT could do more in the area of peer self-concept.

Opinions were collected about the ability of the students "to get along with others." About half of the teachers and 66% of the students reported that CONTACT helped students to get along with others. The students who felt they had improved in their ability to get along with others attributed it mostly to the friendliness of students and teachers. The teachers felt any improvement was a result of the small, open and relaxed atmosphere, the homogeneity of student characteristics and the monitoring on the part of the teachers.

It seems, then, that the CONTACT students need special help in the areas of family and peer relationships and that CONTACT School, because of its size, atmosphere, homogeneity of student population and teachers' attitudes, has the potential to help the students in the area of peer relationships. However, the test data and the opinions of the teachers and students suggest that the potential has not been fully realized, possibly because some of the staff have emphasized academic success as the way to improve self-concept. Here are some selected and interesting quotations from students who felt CONTACT had helped:

"I had no friends in the other schools. I have lots now."

"All the students are friendly here. On the first day, I thought no one would like me; but, everyone did like me."

"I feel better. I talk to everyone in the school. Everyone here is a friend of mine."

"The students are in the same position as I am and we are all relaxed and we get along well together."

"The teachers are friends rather than authority figures."

"The teachers help with problems -- just you and them -- they help a lot. My head wasn't straight. Now I feel good."

"They helped me make a lot of friends. It is too strict in other schools -- everyone is on to themselves."

"I had a complex at the old school -- everyone talked about me. At CONTACT, everybody is together."

"I can work without being teased or bothered -- I used to get uptight in other schools."

"I am getting over my phobia of people. I can let my feelings flow. I can express myself."

Less information was collected in the study to evaluate the concepts of "self-discipline" and "responsibility". That information was in the form of teacher and student opinions. Approximately half of the students (49%) believed their self-discipline had improved at CONTACT. Those who felt they had improved attributed it to teacher encouragement, their liking for CONTACT and the freedom. However, a number of students felt they needed more structure, pressure, challenge, or, strictness to improve. These data strongly suggest that there are two types of students -- those who need the freedom to develop self-discipline and responsibility and those who need to be pressured and challenged. Since the philosophy of the school, as described by the teachers, is to allow the students to proceed at their own rate, approach the teachers when they require assistance, to select materials they are interested in and to internalize the responsibility for their progress, it seems reasonable to conclude that the students who need structure and external discipline will experience considerable difficulty at CONTACT.

Here are some comments from the students who felt their self-discipline had improved:

"I like coming here and I make sure I wake up at 7:00."

"I am more willing to do things on my own because I do not like to be told what to do." 17

"If you want credits, you have to be there. It is up to you."

"My work is now on time -- I work on my own time. I get it done easier."

"When it is up to me, I do it. When I have control, I feel more encouraged to complete things."

"My self-discipline has improved a lot because I can work at my own pace and set my own deadlines."

And, here are some comments from students who felt that their self-discipline had not improved:

"I am 15 minutes late everyday. I used to be late often but have become worse because they don't mind and don't say anything."

"They should yell at the kids more to get more discipline."

"The work gets too easy. I didn't feel like coming in or doing it. The teacher wouldn't help."

"I slacked up on my work. The teachers don't keep on top of you. There is no principal to be strict. You can do anything you want."

"They could use a little more structure because some kids can't handle it."

"It is a personal thing; but, I think teachers could push students a bit more."

Finally, the results of having the teachers rate the students on 30 items covering, in particular, the concepts of getting along with others and responsibility reinforced the conclusion that CONTACT has experienced limited success in helping the students with their social skills. It is possible to identify two reasons for the limited success: (1) Some students will not or can not learn self-discipline and responsibility in a free atmosphere, and (2) the low self-concepts of the students regarding their peer relationships has not been fully understood and considered in the school program.

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Life Skills

Neither the respondents to the first survey to determine the needs of dropout students nor the staff of CONTACT School had a fully developed definition of "life skills." Lacking such a definition, the investigators identified several fitting themes which were frequently mentioned by the survey respondents and staff and loosely grouped them under the heading of "life skills" in order to provide a focus for the evaluation. The themes were: (1) citizens' rights, (2) social issues, (3) knowledge of community, (4) knowledge of future educational and occupational possibilities, and (5) learning to learn or study independently.

The Teachers' Description of How CONTACT School Helps Students with Life Skills.

1. Citizens' rights. The teachers specified several aspects of the CONTACT School program which they felt helped the students become more knowledgeable about citizens' rights. First, it is built into the curriculum. Two courses, in particular, offered in the afternoon three (or four) week blocks -- a law course and a consumer education course -- include a lot of material related to citizens' rights. The law course deals with such things as the rights of tenants; the rights of citizens with respect to search warrants, police arrests, lawyers, etc.; the rights of students; the rights of young people; the rights of workers; the rights of senior citizens; etc. The course pays considerable attention to "street law." It provides the students with a chance to become familiar with legal aid centres and the courts. The consumer education course attempts to make the students more aware of their rights as a consumer and to introduce them to a variety of strategies and agencies they might use to protect themselves or assert their rights.

In addition to the activities associated with these two courses, the weekly speakers' hour introduces the students to a variety of guests (citizens) and their opinions, experiences and attitudes.

Finally, the general meeting provides the students with a chance to learn how citizens may make decisions in a democratic setting by actually providing them with the experiences of voting, abstaining, chairing the meeting, etc.

2. Social Issues. The teachers felt that CONTACT probably expends more energy in helping students become aware of social issues than most regular high schools. First, the curriculum offers several credit courses which comprise a wide range of topics such as sexuality, family planning, health, native people, women's rights, labor, workers' rights, the economy, politics, racism and multiculturism. Second, the speakers' hour provides the students a chance to listen to, question and interact with people deeply involved with the various social issues. People from different cultures, homosexuals, prostitutes, representatives from women's groups, policemen, social workers, doctors, labor representatives and many others have spoken to the students. A couple of teachers emphasized that they try to build on the knowledge, feelings and opinions of the students as they are when they enter CONTACT. Another teacher pointed out that CONTACT does not attempt to influence the students' attitudes or to bias them in any way, but simply attempts to make them more aware of the social issues. Many of the teachers keep in close touch with the daily happenings of the community and try to incorporate the related social issues into the English program. Also, on several occasions, the students have become involved with protests, fasts, ticket selling, etc. associated with particular social issues. (For example, they protested teacher firings at the Toronto Board of Education and received newspaper coverage.)

3. Knowledge of Community. CONTACT tries very hard to increase the students' knowledge of the community through a community studies program (course).

The program consists of regular classes, field trips, contributions from speakers and an opportunity to do volunteer work in local community agencies. They study the needs and services of the community and are encouraged not only to use the community for their own benefit, but to give back to the community. The field trips to museums; libraries; art galleries; markets; courts; health, legal and family planning clinics; recreational areas; etc. are designed to make the students more familiar with and appreciative of the resources of the community. The students have given back to the community by working on a volunteer basis at such places as Woodgreen Community Centre, Harbourfront, day care centres; etc. They have been involved with various community events such as the Cabbagetown Festival and have become acquainted with such things as the local community business association.

4. Knowledge of Future Educational and Occupational Possibilities.

One CONTACT teacher has a particular interest in helping the students know about educational and job possibilities. He has developed a credit course called "Post Secondary Education" and has made it available to senior students. This teacher felt that one of the best things a school could do for students is to bombard them with options. Another teacher commented on how "turned-off" the students are with respect to sorting out their future options and how they must be forced to consider various educational and occupational possibilities. The Post Secondary Education course requires that students visit various educational institutions such as other high schools, community colleges and universities. It introduces the students to such things as the independent studies course at Waterloo, the transitional year program at the University of Toronto and correspondence courses. Provincial job folders and educational brochures are made available to the students. They are taught how to look for jobs, develop resumes and encouraged to keep in touch.

In addition to the course, teachers felt that the community studies program and the speakers' hour probably helped the students become more aware of the options available to them.

5. Learning to Learn or Study Independently. Some teachers felt that it is extremely important the students learn to learn or study independently and constantly try to encourage the students to teach themselves and to discourage them from thinking they need a teacher to learn. Other teachers seemed to feel that little could be done in this area, because most of the students lack the desire to study independently and don't value learning. One teacher felt it was much more important to help the students obtain job skills.

The teachers volunteered very few other comments on this topic.

Of these five topics grouped under "life skills," the teachers generally felt that CONTACT helped students most with "citizens' rights," "social issues," and "knowledge of community" and did not do a good job with "future education and occupational possibilities." They tended not to comment on "learning to learn or study independently."

Many of the teachers made qualifying comments about CONTACT's success in the area of "life skills." They felt that CONTACT was probably successful in developing the students' knowledge about life skills and that the students would probably say they had learned a lot of new ideas; but, they wondered whether the students had developed the attitudes which would enable them to gain control of their lives. That is, were the students using the ideas or was there a transfer of the knowledge to their everyday lives? Some teachers felt that CONTACT could do more to guarantee the use of the knowledge by having the students start that use while still in school.

One teacher doubted the value of teaching "life skills" in school. Another teacher commented on how "turned off" the students were about considering their future and that it was thus very difficult to help them with future

educational and occupational possibilities. And, another teacher thought that helping the students with "life skills" was very difficult because most of the students were not at the level where they had developed a social conscience or concern about the community.

On the other hand, one teacher felt that it is very important that such students know their rights and that it must be part of the curriculum. One teacher felt that the teaching of "life skills" is most successful when it is related closely to the students' personal problems. And, another teacher suggested that the topics related to life skills could be successfully used as an introduction to the more academic areas.

The teachers offered a number of suggestions for improving the way CONTACT helps students in the area of "life skills":

- Need more money for travel, guest speakers, materials, etc.
- Need to provide more concrete, positive ways to improve self -- sometimes the speakers' hour is too heavy, negative and one-sided.
- Need to provide more follow-up. The students need to use their learning at their own level.
- Need to provide more job-related, community-related activities (sometimes city by-laws, etc. make it difficult to do work in the community).
- More structure is needed.
- Students should be more involved with the community. In many ways, attending CONTACT is an escape from the hassles of the community. They should be more than just a part of the community, they should be helping to support the community.
- Citizens' rights could be better dealt with by having the students become more involved with the democracy of the school.
- The general meeting is too large for every student to learn debating skills, chairing skills, etc. The general meeting is also weak in teaching how a democracy works because the students realize they have no real power.
- To improve students' knowledge of future educational and job opportunities, the school needs a scout to search out all possibilities.
- Need a definite time period each week when the school will go out into the community ("outreach") or the community will come into the school ("inreach"). "Outreach" should be work experience as well as volunteer work. "Inreach" would bring people from the community in to teach skills.

### The Students' Opinions About Life Skills

The 98 students who were interviewed were asked to rate how much they had learned in life skills in the four areas of citizens' rights, social issues, knowledge of community and knowledge of future educational and occupational opportunities. They were asked to choose one of three ratings:

- (1) I haven't learned anything
- (2) I have learned a little
- (3) I have learned a lot

They were also asked to state whether or not CONTACT had helped them to learn to study independently.

As shown in Table 49, 86% of the students felt they had learned a little or a lot about citizens' rights; while 79%, 67% and 60% gave those two responses for social issues, knowledge of community and knowledge of future educational and occupational opportunities respectively.

Approximately 81% of the students felt that CONTACT had helped them learn to study independently.

Table 50 shows what the students felt they had learned in the area of citizens' rights. The list is extensive and much of the material would have been learned as a result of the students taking the law course. Table 51 indicates that the majority of the students could think of nothing else they would like to learn in the area of citizens' rights, although a few suggested government, politics and law.

Table 52 indicates what the students felt they had learned about social issues. They most frequently mentioned topics related to sexuality, racism, women's rights, unemployment and consumerism. As exhibited in Table 53, over three-quarters of the students did not name anything else they would like to learn about social skills.

TABLE 49

STUDENTS' OPINIONS OF HOW MUCH THEY HAD LEARNED UNDER  
THE HEADING OF LIFE SKILLS (N = 98)

Students' Responses	Citizens' Rights	Social Issues	Knowledge of Community	Knowledge of Future Educational and Occupational Opportunities
I haven't learned anything	13.3%	21.4%	32.7%	38.8%
I have learned a little	28.6%	34.7%	33.7%	34.7%
I have learned a lot	57.1%	43.9%	33.7%	25.5%
Don't know/ no response	1.0%	--	--	1.0%

TABLE 50

THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS OF WHAT THEY HAD LEARNED  
IN THE AREA OF CITIZENS' RIGHTS (N = 84)

Students' Opinions	Number of Students	Percentage of Students *
How to deal with police/lawyers/ probation officers (arrest procedures, rights)	31	36.9%
Protests (reasons, procedures)	30	35.7%
Laws/ street law	28	33.3%
People's rights (Indians, tenants, young people, women, senior citizens, students, immigrants, etc.)	23	27.4%
Government/politics	19	22.6%
Strikes	10	11.9%
Court	2	2.4%
Miscellaneous (pensions, welfare, drugs, etc.)	19	22.6%
Can't remember	115	3.6%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 51

THINGS STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO LEARN IN THE AREA  
OF CITIZENS' RIGHTS (N = 98)

Topic	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Government/politics	11	11.2%
Law/street law/court	11	11.2%
Peoples' rights	5	5.1%
How to deal with police	5	5.1%
Everything	3	3.1%
Nothing/no response/don't know	65	66.3%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students mentioned more than one topic.

The students who felt they had learned something about the community (67%) were most likely to list museums, the Science Centre, art galleries and social and health services. Over 80% could think of nothing else they would like to learn (see Tables 54 and 55).

The students who felt they had learned something about future educational and occupational opportunities (60%) were more likely, as suggested by the material in Table 56, to say they had learned about job opportunities than educational opportunities. And, Table 57 indicates that approximately 50% of the students would like to learn more about their future opportunities, particularly their future occupational opportunities. These students would like to learn how to find jobs, prepare for specific jobs and learn what jobs are available. A few wanted work experience while in school.

TABLE 52

THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS OF WHAT THEY HAD LEARNED ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES (N = 77)

Students' Opinions	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Sexuality (homosexuality, prejudice, abortion, family planning)	52	67.5%
Racism	32	41.6%
Womens' Rights	30	39.0%
Unemployment	25	32.5%
Consumerism	21	27.3%
Sociology	6	7.8%
Miscellaneous	5	6.5%
No response	7	9.1%

\* This column does not add to 100% since several students gave more than one response.

TABLE 53

THINGS STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES (N = 98)

Topic	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Womens' Rights	8	8.2%
Everything	5	5.1%
Unemployment	4	4.1%
Sociology	4	4.1%
Racism	2	2.0%
Sexuality	1	1.0%
Psychology	1	1.0%
Current Events	1	1.0%
Nothing/no response/don't know	75	76.5%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students gave more than one response.

TABLE 54

THE THINGS STUDENTS HAD LEARNED ABOUT THE COMMUNITY (N = 66)

Item	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Museums	21	31.8%
Science Centre	17	25.8%
Art Galleries	13	19.7%
Social and Health Services	7	10.6%
Planetarium	3	4.5%
Library	2	3.0%
Queen's Park	2	3.0%
Inner City Angels	2	3.0%
Toronto Tours	2	3.0%
Shopping Centres	1	1.5%
Regent Park Community	1	1.5%
Ontario Place	1	1.5%
Pioneer Village	1	1.5%
Police Station	1	1.5%
Cultures	1	1.5%
School Farm	1	1.5%
Nuclear Plant	1	1.5%
Kensington Market	1	1.5%
Harbour Front	1	1.5%
Music/Theatres	1	1.5%
Courts	1	1.5%
Lots of places	2	3.0%
Miscellaneous	6	9.1%
Irrelevant response	2	3.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 55

THINGS STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT THE COMMUNITY (N = 98)

Item	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Community Services	4	4.1%
History of Toronto	3	3.1%
Multiculturism	2	2.0%
Music Shops	2	2.0%
Community places/activities	2	2.0%
City Government	1	1.0%
Museum	1	1.0%
Art Gallery	1	1.0%
Planetarium	1	1.0%
Zoo	1	1.0%
Parks	1	1.0%
More	3	3.1%
No response/nothing/don't Know	80	81.6%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students gave more than one response.

TABLE 56

THE THINGS STUDENTS HAD LEARNED ABOUT FUTURE EDUCATIONAL AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES (N = 59)

Item	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
How to find a job/keep a job	32	54.2%
Information about other schools/ colleges/ universities/correspondence courses, etc.	20	33.9%
Education and background necessary for specific jobs	17	28.8%
Transitional Year Program	2	3.4%
Information about supplements, grants, etc.	1	1.7%
Miscellaneous	4	6.8%
Irrelevant answer	4	6.8%
No response	10	16.9%

\* This column does not add to 100% since a few students gave more than one response.

TABLE 57

THINGS STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT FUTURE  
EDUCATIONAL AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES (N = 98)

Item	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
How to find a job/keep a job (aptitudes, skills)	27	27.6%
Reality about employment/what's available	7	7.1%
Information about other schools/ colleges/universities/correspondence courses, etc.	7	7.1%
Education and background necessary for specific jobs	6	6.1%
Work experience/career exploration	5	5.1%
Miscellaneous	2	2.0%
Irrelevant	1	1.0%
No response/don't know/nothing	51	52.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

It is interesting to compare these findings with those of a recent research study of students' attitudes to work and unemployment (Larter, Fitzgerald and Friendly, 1979). That study found that the majority of 975 students from all Toronto secondary schools agreed with the following nine statements:

- (1) Schools should teach students about unemployment.
- (2) Schools should teach students how the economy functions.
- (3) Schools should teach students how to act in the work world.
- (4) Schools should help students find jobs.
- (5) Schools should teach students how to hold down a job.
- (6) Schools should teach students about their rights in the working world.
- (7) Schools should have work experience programs.

- (8) Schools should teach students how to get jobs.
- (9) Schools should make sure that students have the skills needed for the working world.

The majority of the students who felt they had learned to study independently felt it was due to the individual attention, concern, trust and encouragement from the teachers. A few who said they had not learned to study independently talked of the need for more structure and discipline. See Tables 58 and 59.

#### The Results of the Life Skills Questionnaire

The Life Skills Questionnaire (Appendix N) was devised to determine whether the students improve cognitively with respect to life skills as a result of attending CONTACT School. Such a questionnaire, of course, can give no indication of whether the students' attitudes change or whether they are making use of their knowledge in their everyday lives. The questionnaire was constructed by the investigators only after several students and the teachers had been interviewed with the intention of ensuring that the questions reflected the program of the school as closely as possible. Naturally, the questions which were finally included (in consultation with the teachers) are only a small sample of things the students might learn in the area of life skills while at CONTACT. The bulk of the questions related to citizens' rights, social issues and knowledge of community. The scoring procedures have been described on page 35.

Two steps involving statistical tests were taken to determine whether students change in their knowledge of life skills as a result of attending CONTACT School. First, the students who were pre-tested were divided into two groups -- those who had attended CONTACT for five or more months and those who had attended for less than five months. Means and standard deviations for the students' scores were calculated as follows:

TABLE 58

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS WHO FELT THEY HAD LEARNED  
TO STUDY INDEPENDENTLY (N = 79)

Comment	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Due to individual attention/concern/trust/encouragement from teachers	34	43.0%
Due to increased interest/self-confidence	12	15.2%
Students first misuse freedom, then learn to be serious	2	2.5%
Irrelevant response	7	8.9%
No response	24	30.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 59

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS WHO FELT THEY HAD NOT LEARNED  
TO STUDY INDEPENDENTLY (N = 17)

Comment	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
School needs more structure/discipline/strictness	6	35.3%
I already could study independently	3	17.6%
It is up to the student	2	11.8%
Irrelevant response	2	11.8%
No response	4	23.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

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	Attended Less Than Five Months	Attended Five Or More Months
Number of Students.....	26	19
Mean.....	19.75	25.97
Standard deviation.....	7.26	10.59

A two-tailed t-test for independent samples was performed to test the hypothesis that the difference between the means is equal to zero against the alternative hypothesis that it is different from zero. The hypothesis which was tested at the .05 level of significance was rejected. That is, the students who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months scored significantly higher on a questionnaire about life skills than the students who had attended for less than five months.

Secondly, a t-test for dependent samples was performed to test the hypothesis that the difference between the means for the pre-test scores and the post-test scores for 20 students is equal to zero against the alternative hypothesis that it is different from zero. The pre-test scores, the post-test scores and the change in scores for 20 students are given in Table 60 along with the means and standard deviations. The hypothesis which was tested at the .05 level of significance was not rejected. That is, the mean of the post-test scores is statistically the same as the mean for the pre-test scores.

#### Summary and Discussion

CONTACT appears to be successful in helping the students become more knowledgeable about (1) citizens' rights, (2) social issues, and (3) the community. The teachers' and students' opinions and some of the results of the testing support this conclusion. While the students may become more knowledgeable about such things, the teachers were not sure and this evaluation did not attempt to determine whether that knowledge is used by the students to gain better control of their lives or, in other words, whether the knowledge becomes a viable "life skill." Here is a sample of positive comments from the students:

TABLE 60

STUDENTS' PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES ON THE LIFE  
SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE (N=20)

Student	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Change
a	22.0	31.0	+9.0
b	25.0	32.5	+7.5
c	18.5	25.5	+7.0
d	9.5	14.0	+4.5
e	19.5	23.5	+4.0
f	19.5	23.0	+3.5
g	10.0	12.5	+2.5
h	23.5	25.5	+2.0
i	30.0	32.0	+2.0
j	32.5	33.5	+1.0
k	29.5	30.0	+0.5
l	29.5	29.0	-0.5
m	24.5	23.5	-1.0
n	19.0	17.5	-1.5
o	30.0	28.0	-2.0
p	16.0	11.5	-4.5
q	23.5	17.5	-6.0
r	44.5	38.0	-6.5
s	33.0	25.0	-8.0
t	15.5	6.5	-9.0
MEAN	23.5	24.2	+ .67
STANDARD DEVIATION	8.7	8.1	

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"I learned about the postal strike."

"I learned that girls and guys can do the same work."

"I went to a lot of places -- we visited buildings and then discussed them."

"I learned about agencies that help kids. I learned about V.D. centres and the art gallery."

"I learned about rights and the law. I learned about rights I had no idea about."

"I know a lot more of what is going on in the world."

"I learned about the Science Centre. We went to plays."

"I learned to get involved with the politics of the school."

"I learned about advertising, prices and packaging."

"I took a law course and attended a murder trial."

✓ "I am up-to-date on the activities in Toronto. We visited Kensington Market."

"I learned a lot about Indian rights. I protested at Hydro."

"I learned about family planning and my rights with police."

"I learned how the Toronto Board of Education runs and how to protest."

"The speakers helped me see the 'inside' of things."

"I interviewed some bums on the corner about unemployment. I learned about racism in Africa."

"I learned what to do if I am evicted by a landlord."

"CONTACT is one of the best schools for learning about government and politics."

"I took a few health courses."

"I learned how to choose a doctor."

"I learned how to deal with police. Everything has been really interesting. I remember everything."

The credit courses, the speakers' hour, the general meeting, the school field trips, and the involvement with social issues and the community are the primary ways in which CONTACT School increases the students' knowledge of citizens' rights, social issues and community.

Fewer students (although still the majority) felt they had learned something about future educational and occupational opportunities. They were more likely to say they had learned about job opportunities than about educational opportunities even though CONTACT offered a credit course called "Post Secondary Education." And, when asked what else they would like to learn, they were more likely to suggest job opportunities than educational opportunities. Here are some comments from students who felt they had learned something about future educational and job opportunities at CONTACT:

"I learned how to apply for a factory job."

"I learned about photography as a profession."

"I learned about the independent study course at Waterloo."

"My teachers gave me places to get a job."

"The Centre worker got boys and girls jobs after school."

"I learned about the armed forces and the transitional year program at the University of Toronto."

"I learned where to get a job."

"I learned about Manpower and various youth employment services."

"I learned about other alternative schools."

"I learned that trades are better for money."

"They talk to you about how to get into other schools."

"The teacher told me exactly what I needed for auto mechanics."

And, here is a sample of comments from students who felt they would like to learn more about job opportunities:

"I would like to learn how to fill out an application, how to impress an employer, and how to find a good job with good pay."

"I would like to know different things women can do."

"I'd like to learn how to 'present' myself for a job."

"It is hard to get a job. They should teach you how to get jobs. They should teach you about job agencies."

"I'd like to know the reality about jobs and unemployment."

"The school should have on-the-job training and some courses on how to work on the job."

"I would like to find out what type of job I can do."

Approximately 81% of the students felt that CONTACT had helped them learn to study independently. Here are a few typical comments:

"Definitely. I am doing nothing but working on my own now. I was never able to work on my own at the other school."

"The teacher doesn't preach and scare you. It helps a lot."

"They tell you to do it by yourself."

"After kids misuse their independence, they become more serious -- they learn from their mistakes -- it is a good way to learn."

"yes, because it is democratic. You are not forced to work, therefore you learn to do it."

"The teachers trust you to do things."

"Other schools aren't free enough to allow students to experiment with different styles of learning."

"Yes, I took an independent study course."

"Yes, I don't have to keep up with others."

"yes, they helped me do things on my own. I used to think I was dumb, but not anymore."

"yes, they help to start you first. They give you courage and will power -- then you can do it on your own."

"They explain it and then you work on your own -- you can go back for help."

The teachers made very few comments about learning to learn or study independently.

Democratic and Relaxing Atmosphere

The respondents to the original survey to determine the needs of dropout students provided a number of suggestions which the investigators chose to loosely group under a heading of "democratic and relaxing atmosphere."

- Freedom of student expression
- Students' share in decision-making and formulation of rules
- Discipline and structure
- Less bureaucracy
- Good teacher-pupil relationships
- Freedom of mobility

The Teachers' Opinions about the Atmosphere

1. Freedom of Student Expression. The teachers were in full agreement that the students have the freedom to express themselves at CONTACT. They cited the general meetings, the group meetings, the open physical setting and the attitudes of the teachers as those aspects of CONTACT which most allow for freedom of student expression.

While one teacher felt that students who end up at CONTACT are ones who may not have fit into the regular schools because they were too ready to express their opinions, others felt that they learned to express their opinions as a result of the freedom to do so at CONTACT.

Another teacher felt that a few students might be intimidated by those students who are highly verbal but negative and destructive.

2. Students' share in decision-making and formulation of rules. The teachers' comments and feelings on this topic were extremely difficult to summarize. However, the majority of the teachers felt that, strictly speaking, CONTACT is not run democratically by the students. That is, the students have no constitutional power. They may use the general meetings and group meetings to discuss issues and formulate recommendations, but the staff make all the

final policy decisions.\* This state of affairs is the result of a number of factors. First, there is very little room for the students to make decisions about the school program. Since the school offers a program at levels 4 and 5, the teachers must keep control of it and conform to the Ontario Ministry of Education and Toronto Board of Education guidelines. In addition to the guidelines, the number of decisions to be made about the program are further limited by the skills of the teachers (for example, the teachers could not agree to offer help on all languages the students might elect to study) and by the facilities of the school (for example, there are no science laboratories). Secondly, several of the teachers felt that it is essential the teachers have the ultimate responsibility and be able to veto any absurd demands the students make and that students such as those who enter CONTACT probably need some form of external control and guidance. Third, many students are not interested in making decisions which affect the entire school and tend to have no sense of political commitment. While the overall set up and rules of the school were partially determined by CONTACT's first students five years ago, the present students tend to accept it as it is and have no concept of or interest in changing fundamental rules. They are more likely to be interested in making smaller day-to-day decisions such as whether smoking should be allowed in the washrooms. A fourth factor which limits the ability of CONTACT to function in a fully democratic manner is that the new students simply lack the technical skills to make it work and that one of the purposes of the general meeting is to teach them how to participate in and run a meeting democratically. If the school were to function solely as a result of the decisions and policies made (in a so-called democratic fashion) at the general meetings, all would probably fall apart because so much energy and time is needed to teach the

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\* During the second year of the study, a student representative had a vote at the staff meetings.

students the proper skills and to lead them to become more aware of the nature of political machinery. A couple of teachers commented on how the students could probably exercise a great deal more power at CONTACT, but that very few fully grasp the idea that it might be possible or learn enough skills to make it possible.

There is another side to this story which is fascinating and indicates that the power at CONTACT is, in reality, very subtly defined and delicately balanced. First, the staff allow the students the option of not participating in any part of the program they dislike. For example, if they dislike the teaching style of a particular teacher in a particular course, they will simply stay home. As one teacher put it, the students have the ultimate power because they can walk out. Secondly, the teachers can expect trouble and protest if the students perceive that they are not being listened to or that their recommendations are not being considered. And, as documented in the preceding section, the students are given a great deal of freedom to express their opinions at the group meetings and the general meeting as well as being able to make presentations to the staff meeting. In other words, the students expect to and get to say a lot. Third, the students have some choice about the courses they will take and the teachers with whom they will take them. The chance to make such a choice occurs every three (or four) weeks when the courses change. Fourth, some real decisions such as where to go on field trips are made through the mechanism of the general meeting. Fifth, the school is small and this enables the students to make and put into operation a number of informal rules. And, finally, the judiciary committee which is made up of a representative from each class makes and implements rules through which the students may discipline each other and even the teachers (although, the teachers may override the decisions).

3. Discipline and Structure. The teachers differed considerably in their opinions about discipline and structure and realized that they differed. Some teachers felt that there should be more discipline and structure. One teacher elaborated by giving the example that students should be required to stay in their own areas until break. Another teacher who felt there should be more discipline noted that increasing discipline and structure wouldn't work unless the school was able to offer the students a more non-academic program composed of more life-skills studies. A third teacher felt the rules of the school should be enforced (and added that they probably were), but was concerned that the responsibility was too likely to fall on the shoulders of certain teachers who then become known as disciplinarians while the other teachers become known as "free teachers." And a fourth teacher was unsure what the others meant by discipline and structure, but felt it was easiest to teach in a traditional structured environment.

Other teachers did not believe in imposing external discipline and structure on the students. One teacher who believed this said that it would only prevent the development of the students' self-discipline. This teacher felt that, ideally, each student should be allowed to develop his own personal structure which may or may not include teacher(s), try it out, and then develop a new structure if and when it became desirable. Such an arrangement would probably mean that the teachers would have to timetable or structure themselves in a different way. Another teacher felt that the school tended to be non-structured and that such an arrangement should not be sacrificed even if the students did no work. A third teacher was sure that most of the things the students do, such as wandering around, are not an infringement on other students' rights and that they should be free to do as they wish and will eventually do something useful when they see the need for it.

Various teachers speculated on what the students want. One teacher felt that as the students become more mature, they will begin to find the free atmosphere too upsetting and disturbing, while the immature students will find the atmosphere not free enough. Another teacher explained that the students want freedom and structure at the same time. They want structure with humanity and unoppressive and helpful limits. Another teacher was concerned that the students complain no matter what the atmosphere is. A fourth teacher felt that when the students ask for more discipline, they are really asking for a quiet environment.

A couple of teachers described how the school's program differs in the morning and afternoon. In the morning, the students can only do English and mathematics, but have a great deal of freedom, nonstructure and individualization within those courses. In the afternoon, they can choose from among several courses, but the teachers present those courses in a more structured traditional teacher-centered fashion. Perhaps, they added, some teachers and students prefer the morning arrangement while other teachers and students prefer the afternoon arrangement.

4. Less Bureaucracy. Five of the nine teachers interviewed felt there was less bureaucracy at CONTACT than at regular schools. A couple of teachers remarked, though, that the bureaucracy which does exist in CONTACT is closer to the teachers and more unavoidable than that in regular schools. Another couple of the teachers noted that the school is frustrated by the bureaucracy from the Toronto Board of Education and that teachers are more aware of the board than they might be if they were in a regular school.

However, two teachers felt that there was as much, if not more, bureaucracy at CONTACT than in regular schools. These two teachers also believed that bureaucracy is very necessary to keep a school such as CONTACT.

which offers many alternatives, running smoothly and efficiently. One teacher seemed to be saying that democracy necessitates bureaucracy.

5. Good teacher-pupil relationship. Six of the nine teachers interviewed felt that the teacher-pupil relationship at CONTACT is good. The other three said it depends on the teacher or on a particular combination of teacher and student. They mentioned the favorable student-teacher ratio, the mutual respect and the freedom of expression as factors contributing to the good relationship. The teachers treat the students as people and the students show their appreciation which in return makes the teachers feel good. One teacher said it is most important to create a bond with a student and to do nothing which might break it. Another teacher mentioned how rewarding it is to hear a student say, "You are the first teacher who has helped me."

One teacher seemed a little discouraged about the pupil-teacher relationship and felt it could be improved if the teachers were better matched in terms of socio-economic background.

6. Freedom of mobility. The students move around CONTACT School a lot during class time.

The teachers did not agree on whether or not the students really have that right and some teachers felt it should be discouraged as much as possible.

The school's open plan architecture and smallness probably contribute a lot to the amount of mobility.

7. Suggestions for improvement. The teachers offered very few suggestions for improvement related to the topics in this section. They were:

- Students become tense when they are doing things they don't like. Therefore, the school should provide more active, concrete things for the students to do.
- Each teacher should decide what atmosphere he/she wants and stick to it.

- Every teacher should take responsibility for discipline.
- The staff should concoct issues for the students to get involved in.
- School staff should prioritize objectives and then make decisions on methods (e.g., the objectives of the general meeting).
- The school should establish its own integrity and stop being dictated to by Ministry requirements for credits and diplomas. This would allow the school to operate in a truly democratic fashion and creativity would explode. Students should know what all the options are and be able to follow through on their own choices, then teachers and experts in the field should judge whether they had obtained the skills and maturity needed at a certain level.

#### The Students' Opinions

The 98 students who were interviewed were asked how they felt about expressing their opinions in CONTACT. As Table 61 indicates, the majority or 65% felt very free or free most of the time, while only 7% felt very restricted or restricted most of the time. The students were also asked to identify the occasions when they felt restricted. Their responses are given in Table 62. Many gave no response, but some said they restricted themselves, felt restricted in group situations, or felt restricted when not included for some reason. Very few said that the teachers restricted them from expressing their opinions.

Close to 25% of the students felt they had a great deal of say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT. The rest or the majority felt they had none, a little or some say. (See Table 63). And, when asked to suggest improvements, 21% felt the students should have more say or equality, while 8% felt they had too much say. Many seemed quite satisfied with the situation as it exists at CONTACT. Their responses are given in Table 64.

Next, the students were asked about the relationship between the teachers and students at CONTACT. As displayed in Table 65, 65% described

TABLE 61

HOW STUDENTS FEEL ABOUT EXPRESSING THEIR OPINIONS IN CONTACT (N = 98)

Feelings About Expressing Opinions	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Very restricted	2	2.0%
Restricted most of the time	5	5.1%
Sometimes free/sometimes restricted	27	27.6%
Free most of the time	30	30.6%
Very free	34	34.7%
TOTAL	98	100%

TABLE 62

THE OCCASIONS WHEN STUDENTS FEEL RESTRICTED IN EXPRESSING THEIR OPINIONS (N = 98)

Occasions When Restricted	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
I restrict myself/I prefer to listen	11	11.2%
In meetings/groups	10	10.2%
When I am rejected/not included/disagreed with/labelled/accused	9	9.2%
With the teacher	6	6.1%
When I am not knowledgeable	6	6.1%
In a new situation	3	3.0%
When I am depressed	2	2.0%
Miscellaneous	4	4.1%
No response/don't know	51	52.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 63

THE AMOUNT OF SAY STUDENTS HAVE IN MAKING DECISIONS AND  
RULES CONCERNING CONTACT (N = 98)

The Amount of Say	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
None	12	12.2%
A little	25	25.5%
Some	37	37.8%
A great deal	23	23.5%
No response	1	1.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 64

THE IMPROVEMENTS STUDENTS FELT COULD BE MADE IN THE AMOUNT OF SAY  
THEY HAVE IN MAKING DECISIONS AND RULES IN CONTACT (N = 98)

Improvements	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Felt they had a "great deal" of say/ No improvement suggested	23	23.5%
Alright the way it is	21	21.4%
Students should have more say/equality	21	21.4%
More structure/more control/students have too much say	8	8.2%
Students think they have control, but teachers have it	6	6.1%
Teachers should listen more	2	2.0%
Students should attend meetings	2	2.0%
Miscellaneous	9	9.2%
No response	9	9.2%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 65

STUDENTS OPINIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN CONTACT (N = 98)

The Relationship between Teachers and Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Poor	4	4.1%
O.K./not bad	25	25.5%
Good	32	32.7%
Excellent	32	32.7%
No response	5	5.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

the relationship as good or excellent, while only 4% described it as poor. Those who described the relationship as good or excellent were asked to say why (see Table 66). The students obviously give the teachers a great deal of credit for the quality of the relationship. Those students who felt the relationship was O.K./not bad, were most likely to say it varied with or depended on certain people or particular situations.

The majority of the students (63%) reported that they usually felt relaxed at CONTACT or felt relaxed all the time. Only 9% reported that they usually felt tense or felt tense all the time. These findings are shown in Table 67. They were also asked to identify what made them feel relaxed and/or tense -- see Table 68 for the responses. They were most likely to say the free, open atmosphere where they can work at their own pace made them feel relaxed, while instances of tension were mostly associated with other students' behaviour.

While the majority of the students (56%) felt that the amount of movement allowed around CONTACT during class time is about right, a substantial

TABLE 66

THE REASONS THE STUDENTS FELT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IS GOOD OR EXCELLENT (N = 64)

Reason	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Teachers are helpful/understanding/ respectful/friendly/committed/earthy	51	79.7%
There is communication/understanding/ openness/freedom	23	35.9%
Teachers socialize/go on trips/use first names	9	14.1%
Miscellaneous	4	6.3%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 67

THE AMOUNT OF TENSION/RELAXATION STUDENTS FEEL WHEN THEY ARE AT CONTACT (N = 98)

Amount of Tension/Relaxation	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Tense all the time	1	1.0%
Usually tense	8	8.2%
Sometimes relaxed/sometimes tense	27	27.6%
Usually relaxed	37	37.8%
Relaxed all the time	25	25.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

number or 37% felt there is too much and said it is distracting, felt that the teachers should be stricter or claimed the students take advantage. See Tables 69 and 70.

Finally, the students were asked what they thought about the amount of discipline and structure at CONTACT. The majority (58%) described it as being about right, but another 28% said it is too little. Of those who felt it is too little, most felt the teachers should be stricter and a few felt the students need more self-discipline. See Tables 71 and 72.

TABLE 68

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT WHAT MAKES THEM FEEL  
TENSE/RELAXED AT CONTACT (N = 98)

Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<u>RELAXED</u>		
- atmosphere (free, open, work at own pace)	46	46.9%
- teachers (not strict, understanding)	14	14.3%
- students (friendly, group feeling)	13	13.3%
- other	4	4.1%
<u>TENSE</u>		
- when students are silly/violent/ high/unpredictable	18	18.4%
- when teachers exert pressure/ power-trip	9	9.2%
- when I have difficulty learning or completing work	9	9.2%
- in new situations	2	2.0%
- physical surrounding is noisy/hot	2	2.0%
- other	5	5.1%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 69

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF MOVEMENT ALLOWED AROUND CONTACT  
DURING CLASS TIME (N = 98)

Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Too little	6	6.1%
It's about right	55	56.1%
Too much	36	36.7%
No response	1	1.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 70

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS WHO FEEL THERE IS TOO MUCH MOVEMENT ALLOWED AROUND  
CONTACT DURING CLASS TIME (N = 36)

Comment	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
It is distracting/disturbing	18	50.0%
Students take advantage/teachers should be stricter	13	36.1%
Miscellaneous	4	11.1%
No response	1	2.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

1.40

TABLE 71

STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF DISCIPLINE AND  
STRUCTURE IN CONTACT (N = 98)

Opinion	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Too little	27	27.6%
It's about right	57	58.2%
Too much	5	5.1%
No response	9	9.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 72

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS WHO FEEL THERE IS TOO LITTLE DISCIPLINE  
AND STRUCTURE IN CONTACT (N = 27)

Comment	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Teachers aren't strict enough (behaviour, attendance)	17	63.0%
Students need more self-discipline	8	29.6%
Need more structured program	3	11.1%
Miscellaneous	3	11.1%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one comment.

### Summary and Discussion

The students are free to express their opinions at CONTACT. All the teachers and the majority of the students felt this to be true. The teachers cited the general meetings, the group meetings, the open physical setting and the attitudes of the teachers as those aspects of CONTACT which most allow for freedom of student expression.

The relationship between the students and teachers at CONTACT was defined by the majority of both as good or excellent. A few teachers and students were somewhat more cautious and said it depended on either the individuals or the situations involved. The teachers mentioned the favorable student-teacher ratio, the mutual respect and the freedom of expression as factors which contribute to the good relationship. The students gave the teachers a great deal of the credit. Here are some typical positive comments from the students:

"They talk like your friends."

"We have mutual respect and the same rights."

"It is person to person rather than authority figure to poor little student."

"We talk and express ideas freely."

"Teachers talk like people -- you don't have to watch what you say -- it's good."

"Everybody gets along with teachers. It is one big happy family."

"Teachers are nice and fair."

"The classes are small. You get more attention and you get to know teachers."

"We get together on what we want to do. At other schools, the teachers tell you what to do."

The majority of the students (63%) reported that they usually felt relaxed at CONTACT or felt relaxed all the time. Only 9% reported that

they usually felt tense or felt tense all the time. Here are some comments from those who reported feeling relaxed:

"We can use the phone when we like."

"The general atmosphere is good -- there is nothing bad happening. The kids are really nice. The teachers are not down your back."

"Everyone knows everyone else -- no strangers."

"It is a free atmosphere. No one is uptight. The people create the relaxed feeling. Only very occasionally does a student's uptight feeling spread to others."

"Everyone knows everyone. You can work on your own. You can talk if you want to."

"Everyone is kinder."

"No demands."

"The classes are small and less structured."

"You can talk and have coffee."

"CONTACT is not like a training camp."

The students move around CONTACT School a lot during class time.

However, about half of the teachers and close to 40% of the students felt there is too much movement. The teachers reported the school's open plan architecture and smallness as contributing a great deal to the amount of movement. Here are a few comments from those students who felt there is too much movement:

"It is really disturbing. They should keep students in class, but it is hard in that the philosophical position of the school says they should be free."

"The kids come in late, get coffee, come back when they want. This needs to be corrected."

"Students sometimes take advantage of it."

"It is hard to work."

"It is sometimes distracting when I am trying to concentrate on my reading."

And, some comments from students who felt the amount of movement is about right.

"If you want to work, there is always a quiet place."

"The teachers always know where the kids are."

"It doesn't affect me."

"It keeps you interested if you can take short breaks.  
You feel refreshed if you can go outside for 10 minutes."

"Who wants to sit without moving? It doesn't disturb."

"You can go out to the washroom anytime. That's great."

Both students and teachers were divided in their opinions about the amount of discipline and structure in CONTACT. While the majority of students (58%) thought the amount of discipline and structure is about right, a smaller, but substantial number (28%), believed there is too little. Most of those who believe there is too little suggested that the teachers should take the responsibility for correcting the situation. The following are some quotations from the students which represent both points of view:

"Just not enough discipline for these kids. Teachers just want to be 'Mr. Nice Guy' all the time -- the kids wouldn't like them if they weren't nice -- they're afraid."

"The kids break the rules all the time. There is no principal -- maybe it would help. There should be a head of the school -- a principal for sure."

"CONTACT should be more structured. The students should care more for the school and help keep it in shape."

"The rules make sense."

"It is about right. Being forced to do things is awful -- I hate it."

"We can't have too many rules. Those that we have aren't that bad."

"Some students can't handle other schools. There is no pushing here. We are treated more like adults than children; this makes you behave like a young adult. I like how it is run. There should be more schools like it -- more kids would stay in school. My friends are surprised how great it is. Visitors came with me and couldn't believe it -- they wish there was a school like this available to them -- they were from out of town and in a straight, stiff school."

"We have certain restrictions, but still enjoy liberty."

"There is no way a teacher can force a kid -- can only help him see why he is 'hyper' etc. CONTACT does help kids see these things."

The teachers' ideas about discipline and structure varied greatly; the reader should refer back to pages 123-4 for a review of some of those ideas.

CONTACT School is not run democratically by the students. The students are free to express their opinions in a variety of settings and to make recommendations to the teachers, but all major policy decisions are made by the teachers. The majority of the students seem to be aware that this is the case, since 75% reported that they have none, a little or some say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT. And, interestingly enough, only 21% felt they should have more say or equality. CONTACT seems to have established a delicate balance; the teachers have the ultimate power, but the students expect to express their opinions freely and to have the teachers listen in earnest to what they say. The students are also allowed to practise decision making with small issues at the group meetings and general meeting and to practise rule making in the judiciary committee. One teacher summed it up as follows:

"The students have a lot of power in this school. It is good. They make use of some and should make use of more. But, the staff make the policy decisions. If something works and meets people's needs, everyone is happy. There is no need for concern about government. The only need is to ensure that that kind of system maintains itself and is not turned into another system which serves selfish ends."

Here are a few comments from the students:

"I don't really care about having a say. The final rules are made by the teachers."

"The students have power on reasonable things. The teachers have the last word. The arrangement is O.K."

"You are led to believe you have a say, but the teachers have the final say. It depends on the topic as to whether the teachers or students have the say."

"The staff has the final say when trips are taken and when drugs are involved, etc. The kids can determine the kinds of trips. I am happy with the amount of say."

"The majority of students rule, but the teachers can overrule. I wouldn't suggest any changes. I think it is O.K. the way it is."

"The students can speak at the teachers' meetings. The staff have the final say. It is okay."

"It is alright the way it is. The teachers have the say."

"I am afraid of being kicked out. I don't make use of the say I have."

"Students should have more say about courses -- it's their education, so they should have a say."

"The teachers make all the decisions. There is not the democracy an alternative school should have."

### Individualization and Flexibility

#### The Teachers' Comments about Individualization

The morning program at CONTACT consisting of English and mathematics is completely individualized. The students work at their own level, at their own pace, in their own style and choose their own topics and materials. The teachers attempt to respond in terms of guidance, teaching and evaluation to each student individually. As one teacher put it, "I am dealing with twenty different mathematics programs in my class." Such an individualized program does not exist in the afternoon. While the students are free to choose which of several courses they wish to take in the afternoon for each three (or four) week block, the courses are presented to a group of students and are much more traditional in that the teachers make most of the decisions about content and methodology.

The teachers differed in their opinions about how to introduce a new student to the individualized morning program. Some felt that the students should be introduced to the concept slowly and that it is unrealistic to expect the majority of the students to be able to deal responsibly with so many options and so much time on their own to "do their own thing." As one teacher expressed it, "I believe we must slowly guide the students up the ladder of independence." Other teachers believed that it is best to let the students experience the independence with no guidance and to let them go through a period of trial and error until they come to grips with what they want and what they can do.

The teachers were then asked, "What improvement do you feel could be made to better respond to the individual needs of students?" Each of the following ideas were suggested by one or more teachers:

- A guidance or counselling service is needed to deal with the students' emotional, health and attendance problems and to help them plan their lives (e.g., to decide how many and what credits they need for future plans). However, at least one teacher spoke against this idea remarking on how so many of the students are already involved with one, sometimes as many as ten "workers" and that some have psychiatrists. This teacher felt that the students probably don't need any more individual help of that kind. Another teacher thought the solution lay in offering more courses which might introduce the students to more of the educational and employment opportunities available to them.
- Some teachers wondered about the desirability of so much individualization. One teacher felt that the students probably need to belong to a group since so many lack good family lives. Others simply felt that learning would be enhanced if the students could experience more group work in the morning program (e.g., a group discussion of a novel all had read).
- More time and energy should be devoted to students who have below grade nine English and mathematics skills. These students should also be allowed to take other grade nine courses while they are upgrading their English and mathematics skills.
- Individualization means a heavy work load for the teachers. One teacher thought that it could not be done successfully with over eight students. Another teacher felt a wide variety of detailed course outlines (including assignments) would help relieve teachers of the heavy work load.
- To earn credits, the students should be told what skills and competencies they must attain for a certain level. Then they should be asked to make decisions on what they would like to do to attain those skills and competencies. When ready, the students should be asked to go out into the community to show they are capable. Experts in the community, along with the CONTACT teachers would judge the performance and grant credits accordingly.

The Teachers' Comments about Flexibility

The teachers' characterized CONTACT as being flexible with respect to program or courses within limits. The individualized morning program and the afternoon choice of courses (many of which are developed as a result of student demand) make CONTACT seem flexible. However, the school is limited by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Toronto Board of Education guidelines, the number of teachers, the skills of the teachers and the facilities of the school. CONTACT is particularly limited in what it can offer the students in the areas of art, music, science, sports and social activities. The emphasis is on English, mathematics, social sciences, arts, humanities, community studies and communication. One teacher suggested that CONTACT's program could be made more flexible if the school were attached to a larger secondary school so that they could use the school's wider range of facilities.

CONTACT is flexible in that the students may transfer to another teacher or class if they become dissatisfied. The teachers are quite flexible with respect to what school trips are taken and there is flexibility because it is possible to include things in the program on fairly short notice.

CONTACT is inflexible with respect to drugs and fighting. The staff believe students should be kicked out for being involved with either. (They believe other schools are more flexible). However, with respect to some kinds of behaviour such as eating in school or moving around during class time, CONTACT is probably more flexible than other schools.

CONTACT is not the easiest school to get into -- students must prove themselves through a three week probation period.\*

Attendance is compulsory at CONTACT and many of the teachers firmly

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\* During the second year of the study, this was required only of students who were under sixteen years of age.

believe in it; however, they seem to have been forced into a more flexible position on this issue. The students' poor attendance is so often associated with their family, social and emotional problems that it seems inhumane to kick them out for poor attendance. For example, how can one justify kicking a sixteen year old student out of school when that student has been forced to leave home and spend several days looking for a job and a place to live? Other things such as unusually nice or inclement weather also affect the students' attendance. During the two years of this study, the students scarcely attended during May and June.

The Students' Opinions

Nearly all the students (88%) reported that they got enough individual attention at CONTACT. While many chose not to elaborate, some gave the teachers the credit and some said it was because of the small classes. Other explanations are given in Table 73.

The investigators decided to ask the students two questions in order to determine whether the program at CONTACT is flexible enough to meet the students' needs. The first question was, "Does CONTACT provide you with the courses you want and, if not, which courses would you like?" The majority of students (58%) answered, "yes", but 34% answered, "no". See Table 74. And, as listed in Table 75, the courses the students would like are mostly ones which cannot be provided at CONTACT because of the inadequate facilities.

The second question was "Does CONTACT provide you with the extra-curricular activities and sports that you want and, if not, what would you like?" The majority of the students (55%) answered, "yes", but 43% answered, "no". See Table 76. As shown in Table 77, the majority of those who are dissatisfied with what CONTACT can offer would like more sports.

TABLE 73

DO STUDENTS GET ENOUGH INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AT CONTACT? (N = 98)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<u>Yes (87.8%)</u>		
- can talk to teachers/they help with problems	23	23.5%
- small classes	17	17.3%
- depends on teacher	8	8.2%
- other	2	2.0%
- no explanation	37	37.8%
<u>No (11.2%)</u>		
- teachers sit while kids work alone	4	4.1%
- teachers try but too many students with problems	3	3.1%
- other	3	3.1%
- no explanation	1	1.0%
No response (1.0%)		

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

TABLE 74

DOES CONTACT PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE COURSES THEY WANT? (N = 98)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Yes	57	58.2%
No	33	33.7%
Sometimes	8	8.2%
TOTAL	98	100%

TABLE 75

OTHER COURSES STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO TAKE AT CONTACT (N = 33)

Course	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<u>Courses requiring equipment/materials not available at CONTACT</u>		
Business (English, typing)	10	30.3%
Shop/Woodworking	6	18.2%
Mechanics (auto, aircraft, small motors)	5	15.2%
Home Economics	5	15.2%
Art	5	15.2%
Music	3	9.1%
Pottery/Ceramics	2	6.1%
Drycleaning	1	3.0%
Driving	1	3.0%
Hairdressing	1	3.0%
Appliance repair	1	3.0%
Graphics	1	3.0%
Electricity	1	3.0%
Cooking/Catering	1	3.0%
Swimming	1	3.0%
Chemistry	1	3.0%
Biology	1	3.0%
Drafting/Architecture	1	3.0%
More Science	1	3.0%
Cashier	1	3.0%
Theatre Arts	1	3.0%
<u>Other Courses</u>		
Social Sciences	5	15.2%
Home Nursing/Child care/Day care	4	12.1%
Photography	3	9.1%
Survival	2	6.1%
Bookkeeping	1	3.0%
Secretarial	1	3.0%
Spanish	1	3.0%
History	1	3.0%
Archeology	1	3.0%
Accounting	1	3.0%
More English	1	3.0%
Senior level courses	1	3.0%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students named more than one course.

TABLE 76

DOES CONTACT PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS THEY WANT? (N = 98)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Yes	54	55.1%
No	42	42.9%
Sometimes	2	2.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 77

OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS STUDENTS WOULD LIKE AT CONTACT (N = 42)

Activity	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<b>SPORTS</b>		
Gymnastics	12	28.6%
Baseball	11	26.2%
Hockey	10	23.8%
Teams (play other schools)	6	14.3%
Basketball	6	14.3%
Football	5	11.9%
More equipment	5	11.9%
Track & Field	4	9.5%
Soccer	4	9.5%
Sports (general)	3	7.1%
Swimming	3	7.1%
Tennis	2	4.8%
Volleyball	2	4.8%
Ping Pong	1	2.4%
Floor Hockey	1	2.4%
Wrestling	1	2.4%
<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>		
Music	3	7.1%
Art	1	2.4%
Drafting	1	2.4%
More trips	1	2.4%
Don't know	2	4.8%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students named more than one activity.

Summary and Discussion

The students are satisfied with the amount of individual attention they get at CONTACT. The classes are small, the teachers constantly strive to attend to the students' needs on an individual basis and the morning program of English and mathematics is completely individualized. Here are some quotations from the students:

"The teachers come immediately. In other schools, you have to wait for help and attention. Here, you feel comfortable with teachers."

"Everyone is doing individual work. The teachers are always there."

"They pay more attention to our problems and are more concerned than in a regular school."

"It is good."

"You just have to ask for it."

"If I have a problem, the teacher knows and helps. I had trouble with schools before. This is good."

"The classes are small. There is lots of attention. The teachers are good and go slow to help. I need that."

"If you want to be alone with the teachers, you can go and talk."

"The teachers don't talk to the whole class. There is individual discussion."

A substantial number of students (34%) want courses which are not offered at CONTACT. Most of the courses the students would like require facilities and/or teacher skills which are not available at CONTACT.

And, a substantial number of students (43%) want sports and/or extra-curricular activities which are not offered at CONTACT. The students were most interested in sports activities, particularly gym, hockey and baseball. Again, CONTACT is limited by lack of equipment and facilities.

Academic and/or Employment Advancement

Many of the respondents to the fall survey to determine the needs of dropout students which an alternative school such as CONTACT should attempt to meet referred to academic and/or employment advancement. This was a very complex objective to evaluate, since it is close to impossible to determine what might have happened to the students had they not attended CONTACT and the difficulties associated with following up such students after they leave CONTACT are immense (many move frequently, have telephones which are out of service, refuse to return calls, ignore follow-up letters, etc.). In addition, the students' life situations are not stable. That is, a student who reports that he has a good job one week may very well be unemployed the next or a student who says he is attending another school one week, may have dropped out the next. Thus, to report that a certain percentage of students have jobs or are continuing in their education after leaving CONTACT, indicates only a little about the success or lack of success CONTACT has with dropout students.

Notwithstanding these serious limitations, data were collected to attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How many credits have students obtained from other high schools before entering CONTACT?
2. How long do students stay at CONTACT?
3. How many credits do students get at CONTACT?
4. Are students satisfied with the credits they have received while at CONTACT?
5. Are students employed and/or continuing with their education after they leave CONTACT?

With respect to the first three questions, information was gathered from the students' school records. Of the 178 students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls, 157 or 88% of the students had records available for examination.

For this sample of 157 students, information about the number of credits obtained from other high schools was available for 117 students. Many of these students (44%) had obtained no credits from other high schools and only 9% had obtained ten or more credits. The data are presented in Table 78.

TABLE 78  
NUMBER OF CREDITS OBTAINED FROM OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS

Number of Credits	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Adjusted Percentage for N=117 Students
0	52	33.1%	44.4%
1-1.9	10	6.4%	8.5%
2-2.9	5	3.2%	4.3%
3-3.9	5	3.2%	4.3%
4-4.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
5-5.9	7	4.5%	6.0%
6-6.9	9	5.7%	7.7%
7-7.9	10	6.4%	8.5%
8-8.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
9-9.9	3	1.9%	2.6%
10 and over	10	6.4%	8.5%
No information	40	25.5%	-
TOTAL	157	100%	100%

Table 79 shows the length of time the students (some of which were still enrolled at the time the data were gathered) had been enrolled at CONTACT School. Approximately 80% had been on the permanent rolls for less than seventeen months and approximately 50% had been on the rolls for six to ten months.

The majority of the students (as illustrated in Table 80) had obtained three or fewer than three credits while at CONTACT.

Of the 98 students on the January 1978 and October 1978 rolls who were interviewed (25 who had left CONTACT within five months and 73 who had remained in CONTACT for five or more months) approximately 25% answered, "yes" to the

TABLE 79

LENGTH OF TIME ENROLLED AT CONTACT\*

Length of Time**	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
1 month	2	1.3%
2 months	3	1.9%
3 months	5	3.2%
4 months	6	3.8%
5 months	10	6.4%
6 months	21	13.4%
7 months	11	7.0%
8 months	22	14.0%
9 months	5	3.2%
10 months	18	11.5%
11 months to 16 months	24	15.3%
17 months to 20 months	6	3.8%
21 months to 26 months	10	6.4%
27 months to 30 months	2	1.3%
31 months to 36 months	1	0.6%
37 months to 40 months	-	-
41 months to 46 months	1	0.6%
47 months to 50 months	1	0.6%
No information	9	5.7%
TOTAL	157	100%

\* 51 of these students were still on the rolls when this information was gathered from the student records.

\*\* The number of months is school-year months only. The months of July and August are not included.

question, "Did you get the credits you planned to get at CONTACT?" A closer examination of the figures in Table 81 reveals that the students who left CONTACT within five months after January and October 1978 were less satisfied with the number of credits they had obtained than those who remained for five or more months.

TABLE 80  
NUMBER OF CREDITS OBTAINED FROM CONTACT\*

Number of Credits	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Adjusted Percentage for N = 125 Students
0	36	22.9%	28.8%
less than 1	33	21.0%	26.4%
1-1.9	25	15.9%	20.0%
2-2.9	13	8.3%	10.4%
3-3.9	4	2.5%	3.2%
4-4.9	5	3.2%	4.0%
5-5.9	1	0.6%	0.8%
6-6.9	4	2.5%	3.2%
7-7.9	1	0.6%	0.8%
8-8.9	1	0.6%	0.8%
9 and over	2	1.3%	1.3%
No information	32	20.4%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* 51 of these students were still on the rolls when this information was gathered from the student records.

TABLE 81  
DID STUDENTS GET THE CREDITS THEY PLANNED TO GET AT CONTACT  
(98 students on the January 1978 and October 1978 rolls)

Response	Students Who Left Contact Within Five Months (N=25)	Students Who Remained In Contact For Five or More Months (N=73)	Total (N=98)
Yes	8.0%	30.1%	24.5%
No	76.0%	21.9%	35.7%
Taking Pre-Nine Courses	-	8.2%	6.1%
Not Interested in Credits	-	4.1%	3.1%
Other Comments	12.0%	17.8%	16.3%
Don't Know	4.0%	17.8%	14.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The investigators attempted to find out what students do after they leave CONTACT. Information was gathered from three groups of students:

- (1) Students on the January 1978 and October 1978 rolls who left CONTACT during the five months following January and October (N=68).
- (2) Students on the June 1978 rolls who did not return to CONTACT (N=49).
- (3) Students who had been on probation at CONTACT, but had not become permanent students (N=77).

The information which was gathered (mostly by telephone interviewing), is presented in Tables 82, 83 and 84. The reader should keep in mind, while examining the information, that many students could not be located for a telephone interview. Information about a few students was obtained from the teachers and secretary.

Students who left CONTACT during the school year (Table 82) were most likely to be working or continuing their education. Students who left CONTACT at the end of the school year (Table 83) were most likely to be continuing their education, although some were working. And, students who had not become permanent students after the probation period, were most likely to be doing nothing or looking for a job, although some were continuing their education. (Table 84).

It appears, then, that approximately 70% to 80% of the students who have been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT are continuing their education and/or working after they leave CONTACT, while approximately 70% of the students who had been on probation and not the permanent rolls of CONTACT are doing nothing or looking for work. This comparison seems to speak favorably for CONTACT, although one must keep in mind that the two groups of students are different since one group succeeded in getting on the rolls and the other didn't.

TABLE 82

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS ON THE JANUARY 1978 AND OCTOBER 1978 ROLLS  
WHO HAD LEFT CONTACT WITHIN FIVE MONTHS (N = 68)

Activities*	Number of Students	Percentage** of Students	Percentage** Adjusted for N=25 Students
Working (full or part-time)	10	14.7%	40.0%
Attending another school/ soon to attend another school/taking correspondence courses	8	11.8%	32.0%
Doing nothing	4	5.9%	16.0%
Looking for work	3	4.4%	12.0%
Babysitting	2	2.9%	8.0%
Raising a family	1	1.5%	4.0%
Recovering from accident	1	1.5%	4.0%
No response	1	1.5%	4.0%
Student could not be reached for interview	43	63.2%	-

\* 72% of the 25 students interviewed reported that they had been involved with the activity since they left CONTACT.

\*\* This column of percentages does not add to 100% since a few students who were interviewed gave more than one response.

TABLE 83

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS ON THE JUNE 1978 ROLLS WHO DID NOT  
RETURN TO CONTACT (N=49)\*

Activities**	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage Adjusted for N=33 Students
Continuing Education			
- another high school	16		
- night school	1		
- University of Waterloo (Independent Study Program)	1	38.8%	57.6%
- University of Toronto (Transitional Year Program)	1		
Working (full or part-time)	9	18.4%	27.3%
Looking for a job	3	6.1%	9.1%
Attending school and working	1	2.0%	3.0%
Unemployed	1	2.0%	3.0%
No information available	16	32.7%	-
TOTAL	49	100.0%	100.0%

\* 19 students were interviewed, the teachers and secretary provided information for 14, and information was not available for 16.

\*\* 63% of the 19 students interviewed reported that they had been involved with the activity since they left CONTACT.

TABLE 84

ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN ON PROBATION AT CONTACT  
BUT HAD NOT BECOME PERMANENT STUDENTS (N = 77)

Activities*	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage Adjusted for N=32 Students
Doing nothing/Looking for a job	22	28.6%	68.8%
Continuing Education			
- another high school	4		
- night school	1		
- back at CONTACT	1		
	6	7.8%	18.8%
Working (full or part-time)	3	3.9%	9.4%
Other	1	1.3%	3.1%
Student could not be reached for interview	45	58.4%	-
TOTAL	77	100.0%	100.0%

\* 75% of the 32 students interviewed reported that they had been involved with the activity since they left CONTACT.

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During the 1978-79 school year, a CONTACT Centre worker did a study of students who had left. He found that 56% of the 65 he located (many of whom would have been on the investigators' lists) had found jobs or were continuing their education.

Summary

Most students enter CONTACT with very few high school credits, most students remain in CONTACT for fewer than seventeen months and most students obtain very few credits while at CONTACT.

Students who have been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT and have left are most likely to be working and/or continuing their education, while students who have not been accepted on the permanent rolls after the probation period are most likely to be doing nothing or looking for a job.

Other Selected Student Opinions

This section comprises the students' responses to a few questions which do not directly relate to the six general areas identified as needs of dropout students and which provided the foci for most of the other interview questions.

The reader should recall that four groups of students were identified and asked different questions. They were:

- (1) Students on the January 1978 and/or October 1978 rolls who remained in CONTACT for five or more months after one of those dates. (73 interviewed)
- (2) Students on the January 1978 or October 1978 rolls who left CONTACT within five months after those dates. (25 interviewed)
- (3) Students on the June 1978 rolls who did not return to CONTACT (19 interviewed six to ten months later) (Several of these students were included in the first group).
- (4) Students who had been on probation at CONTACT, but had not been on the permanent rolls (32 interviewed).

General Likes and Dislikes about CONTACT

Students in groups 1, 2 and 4 (N=130) were asked to generally state what they liked and disliked about CONTACT. Their responses are presented in Tables 85 and 86.

The students seem to be most impressed by the freedom at CONTACT and spoke of the freedom to move about, the freedom to express their opinions, the small number of rules, the absence of a principal and the open area. Only 10% of the students said they disliked the freedom.

The students were somewhat divided about teachers, students and courses. When students said they liked teachers (39%), they described their friendliness and individualization; when they said they disliked some teachers (17%), they referred to a particular style of teaching or "power-tripping".

TABLE 85

WHAT STUDENTS GENERALLY LIKE ABOUT CONTACT (N = 130)

Likes	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<u>Freedom</u> (movement, speech, open area, no principal, few rules, general meetings)	66	50.8%
<u>Teachers</u> (friendly, give individual attention)	50	38.5%
<u>Courses</u> (work at own rate, trips)	47	36.2%
<u>People/Students</u> (friendly, easy to get along with)	31	23.8%
<u>Breaks/lunch hour system</u>	5	3.8%
<u>Size of School</u>	4	3.1%
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	11	8.5%
<u>Everything</u>	7	5.4%
<u>Nothing</u>	10	7.7%
<u>No response</u>	7	5.4%

\* This column does not add to 100% since several students gave more than one response.

TABLE 86

WHAT STUDENTS GENERALLY DISLIKE ABOUT CONTACT (N = 130)

Dislikes	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
<u>Students</u> (language, behavior, attitudes, discipline, background, lack of interest in learning)	33	25.4%
<u>Some Teachers</u> (power-tripping, methodology)	22	16.9%
<u>Courses</u> (lack of variety, lack of detail, too easy)	16	12.3%
<u>Lack of resources/facilities/extra-curricular activities</u>	13	10.0%
<u>Freedom</u>	13	10.0%
<u>Lack of structure/discipline/guidance/authority figure</u>	5	3.8%
<u>Location of school/physical appearance of school</u>	4	3.1%
<u>Distance to school</u>	4	3.1%
<u>Open plan of school</u>	3	2.3%
<u>Miscellaneous</u>	20	15.4%
<u>Nothing</u>	30	23.1%
<u>Everything</u>	3	2.3%
<u>No response</u>	12	9.2%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

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When students said they liked the students (24%), they spoke of their friendliness, but when they said they disliked the students (25%), they spoke of their language, behaviour and attitudes. Those students who said they liked the courses (36%) talked about being able to work at their own rate and the trips. Those who said they disliked the courses (12%), complained about the lack of variety, depth and challenge in the courses.

Some students (10%) reported disliking CONTACT because of the inadequate resources, facilities and extra-curricular activities.

Approximately 23% of the students said there was "nothing" they disliked about CONTACT while 8% said there was "nothing" they liked.

#### Reasons Students Leave CONTACT

Very few students attend CONTACT for longer than seventeen school months (this was discussed in the preceding section). Why do they leave? The investigators were able to ask 44 students (groups 2 and 3) why they had left CONTACT. The reader should recall that these 44 students represent 38% of the students who were originally identified for groups 2 and 3 --- the rest could not be reached for the telephone interview.

The students' reasons for leaving CONTACT are shown in Table 87. There are no reasons which were given by a large number of students. The students seem to leave for a wide variety of reasons.

#### The Reasons Some Students Do Not Get On The Permanent Rolls of CONTACT

The investigators identified 77 students who had been on probation at CONTACT during the two year period of the study and had not become permanent students -- 32 (42%) were available for an interview.

Of these 32 students, 59% said they had wanted to get on the rolls. When asked why it didn't happen, most said it was because they had not attended regularly. Another 34% said they didn't want to get on the rolls after the probation period, mostly because they simply didn't like CONTACT. The remainder were undecided about what they wanted.

TABLE 87

REASONS STUDENTS LEAVE CONTACT (N = 44)

Reasons	Number of Students	Percentage of Students*
Not learning/not getting ahead/didn't get credits	8	18.2%
Wanted/needed a job	5	11.4%
Wanted another school/college	5	11.4%
No challenge/dull	4	9.1%
Students are a bad influence	4	9.1%
Because of teacher(s)	4	9.1%
Kicked out/taken off rolls	3	6.8%
Sick/pregnant	3	6.8%
Too free/lack of discipline/attendance not compulsory	3	6.8%
Too strict on attendance	2	4.5%
Just didn't like it	2	4.5%
No principal	1	2.3%
Lack of facilities	1	2.3%
Too hard	1	2.3%
Moved	1	2.3%
Too far from home	1	2.3%
Summer came	1	2.3%
I was beaten up	1	2.3%
My parents wanted it	1	2.3%
I was too old	1	2.3%
I was too involved in school politics	1	2.3%
I wasn't getting along	1	2.3%
They are always fighting with the Toronto Board	1	2.3%
I can't stand school for more than a few months at a time	1	2.3%
It is personal	1	2.3%

\* This column does not add to 100% since some students gave more than one response.

Students may repeat the probation period if they really want to get on the rolls of CONTACT -- 28% of the 32 students said that it was not the first time they had tried and 41% said they intended to try again.

Summary

There are three major points to be made from the data presented in this section:

- (1) "Freedom" seems to be the general characteristic of CONTACT which most impresses the students. This refers to freedom of movement, freedom of speech, few rules, no principal and the atmosphere of the general meetings.
- (2) The students leave CONTACT for a wide variety of reasons. No reason was given frequently enough to be identified as characteristic.
- (3) The majority of probation students who really want to get on the rolls do not succeed because of poor attendance.

Other Selected Teacher Opinions

Teacher Work Load and Responsibilities

All nine teachers reported that their average work week was more than 35 hours; most teachers felt they worked from 40 to 50 hours a week, while two teachers felt they averaged more than 50 hours a week. They have no spares during the day and cannot expect their lunch hours and breaks to be uninterrupted. In addition to actually teaching, the teachers reported that considerable time was consumed by course development, preparation and marking. As one teacher explained, "We introduce a new set of afternoon courses every three (or four) weeks. The courses involve 2 1/2 hour classes everyday and twelve kids can go through a tremendous amount of material. Personally, I have repeated a course only once in the past year." Administration, which will be discussed in the next paragraph, also consumes a fair amount of the teachers' time. They said they spend very little time on extra-curricular activities and do counselling mostly in combination with the time spent teaching.

The teachers were asked to particularize what responsibilities they have at CONTACT which they wouldn't have at a regular school. The teachers repeatedly mentioned two things. First, they felt they were much more involved with administrative matters than other teachers would be. Since CONTACT has no principal, vice-principal or department heads, the teachers divide up the responsibilities normally shouldered by those individuals and allocate them among themselves. Some of the responsibilities they mentioned were budget, library resources, trips, student records, report cards, liaison with the Toronto Board of Education, liaison with the community and parents, OSSTF meetings, student discipline and lengthy and frequent staff meetings to make decisions\*

\* Instead of having a school principal or the equivalent thereof, the teachers make the decisions at staff meetings according to a strict democratic model.

about every aspect of the school. Secondly, the teachers said that working at CONTACT meant that they had to relate more closely to the students and to other staff members than they would have to in a regular school. They felt it was impossible to exist in CONTACT unless one had garnered the support and confidence of the students and that the administrative setup of the school made involvement with the teachers and Centre workers imperative. The teachers also mentioned several other things which they felt were peculiar to teaching in CONTACT. The following ideas were each mentioned by one teacher:

- Subject matter must be made as relevant as possible to the students' lives.
- Teachers must provide variety since the students have short attention spans.
- Teachers must structure independent activities with precise questions and careful guidelines.
- Teachers must be involved in the development of curriculum.
- Teachers must have an overall picture of the school and must think about what everyone else is doing.
- Teachers must stand by their personal philosophies.  
The teacher who talked of this said that this requirement means that many teachers "burn out" quickly because alternative schools are often in the throes of a philosophical crisis.
- Teachers are called by their first names by everyone.
- Teachers must be patient, tolerant and accept the frustration associated with helping young people who are often "turned off" on school. They must be willing to compromise their ideas around academic excellence and authority relationships.
- Teachers must make an effort to appeal to where the students are methodologically and in terms of content.

- Teachers must come to grips with the way decisions are made and must get used to staff meetings.
- Teachers must accept the idea that they are responsible for what happens in the school without becoming overly burdened emotionally.

The investigators also asked the teachers if there were duties associated with teaching in regular schools which are not required of them in CONTACT. They mentioned: (1) final exams; (2) track and field, outdoor education, coaching in sports, etc.; (3) students' extra-work projects to earn extra points or to raise marks; and (4) hierarchical administrative pressures.

#### Teachers' Likes, Dislikes and Disillusions about CONTACT

The teachers like the fact that they get to know the students, get involved with them, relate to them as people and become their friends. They say they like the students and use adjectives such as "bright", "capable", and "open" to describe them. They like the facts that the classes are small and the morning programs are individualized, thus allowing the students to proceed at their own rate and level and to be dealt with on a very personal one-to-one basis. A few teachers were glad to be at CONTACT because discipline problems were less severe than in other schools. One teacher said, "There is less physical violence."

The teachers like the relaxed, informal and supportive atmosphere of the school where they may express their opinions freely and dress according to their own wishes.

Many of the teachers like being involved in administering the school and in making basic decisions about philosophy, theory, program and courses.

Apropos of dislikes, several teachers referred to the dissension (which often leads to antagonism) among the staff regarding fundamental issues

such as the aims and goals of the school, teaching methodology, administration strategies, discipline measures and use of space. Without an administrative head (which some teachers felt would resolve the difficulties), these issues were repeatedly dealt with (in a democratic fashion) at the staff meetings. And, in spite of being able to come to decisions according to the vote of the majority, some teachers complained that others still acted unilaterally. Some teachers reported that this situation was frustrating, tiring and was working to the detriment of the students.

A couple of the teachers mentioned that they found it difficult to work with many of the students because of their negative (due to deleterious home life experiences), noncompetitive, unmotivated and antipathetic attitudes. As one teacher said, "It is difficult to relate subject matter to the kids' emotional framework."

At least four of the nine teachers came to CONTACT with no real knowledge, preconceived notions or expectations about the school. However, here are some of the disillusionments or surprises the teachers experienced:

"I expected the kids to be more self-disciplined and independent."

"There is a difference between theory and fact."

"The school is not democratic in the real sense. The kids have no involvement with curriculum planning, extra-curricular activities, administrative structures, etc. Therefore, CONTACT is not an alternative school. To be an alternative school, the students need to be involved in much more of the decision-making. CONTACT is simply trying to do a super good job of what the regular schools haven't been able to do."

"I had specialized in interdisciplinary studies and hoped to be able to pursue this at CONTACT. It has not come about."

"I was surprised about the workload."

"I have come to realize that the school is part of society and can only be a 'band-aid.'

"At the beginning, I felt the school should be very free. I feel now that I didn't have much understanding of what inner-city kids need. These are kids who have turned away from the regular schools, but are still seeking to continue their education. (They take a lot of personal risks in coming to such a different setting as CONTACT school.) I feel that 90% of these kids want the 'pieces of paper' so that they can get a good job.

I feel that nothing is going to work except what meets the students' immediate perceptions of what they feel they should be doing in school. They perceive that the only way they can succeed is to do the same things they have previously failed at; but, they fail because they see those things as irrelevant and ridiculous. They want to succeed in the normal way even though they see the normal way as ludicrous.

Even though the ultimate for me as a teacher is to have a student say that he wants to learn and wants me to keep out of the way, this usually does not happen with these kids. It is a waste of time and destructive to these kids to leave them on their own with a lot of freedom."

#### Teachers' Perceptions of How CONTACT Generally Affects Students Favourably

One major theme was reiterated by the teachers in a variety of ways and can probably best be summarized by saying that the teachers believe the students are affected favourably while in CONTACT because they are treated as people or equals by the staff. The teachers care for them, give them individual attention, don't "put them down", allow and encourage them to express themselves (in oral and written form), listen to them, allow them to fight back, and provide them with a framework in which they can be themselves (academically and personally).

#### Teachers' Perceptions of the Changes Which Should be Made

The teachers were asked to speculate about changes which could be made in CONTACT to better meet the needs of the students and to alleviate any unfavourable influences which the school might be having on the students. The

teachers offered quite a selection of ideas and it is probably best to present them as a listing rather than in a summary form (The reader must keep in mind that not all teachers agreed with some of these ideas.):

"There should be more discipline".

"There should be more control and monitoring of attendance".

"The students need closer guidance because peer pressure is often negative".

"The open physical structure may not be good because some students have no internal discipline and the open area distracts".

"We need a fundamental change in program because we have a real problem in terms of success rate. I am not sure what the change should be".

"CONTACT Centre is not working and needs to be changed".

"The teachers need time for administrative work during school hours".

"We need to change the morning program so that there is more group work".

"We need more curriculum development".

"We need to get rid of the judiciary committee. It will not work with our present turnover rate of students".

"The students should have more say in the program. A committee made up of teachers and students might be workable".

"We should change the administrative decision making process. The staff meetings are negative in terms of interactions between the teachers and it reaches the students".

"We must insure that the students are moving forward. If the kids perceive that they are not attaining what they want and need in a couple of months, they will leave. They will leave in spite of how well they are being treated and how good a time they are having".

"We need an administrative head".

"We need clear direction about discipline, lateness, attendance, job orientation and life skills".

"We need a consistent overall approach. We need to avoid staff conflict and work as a unit. We set a bad example for the kids".

CONTACT Centre

The history of the development of CONTACT Centre has been described in the section which discussed the history of CONTACT School. The reader will recall that the Centre was originally made possible by a LIP grant which paid the salaries of three workers -- a co-ordinator and two workers. A CONTACT teacher was also assigned to the Centre on a full-time basis. The Centre was located in a setting separate from the school and the activities of the Centre were also quite separate from the school.

At the time of the study (the two academic years, 1977-78 and 1978-79), CONTACT Centre was physically situated in a corner of CONTACT School and was somewhat involved in the activities of the school. The three workers (including a co-ordinator) were employed by the Toronto Board of Education. A CONTACT teacher was no longer assigned to the Centre.

The investigators debated about whether to include mention of the Centre in the evaluation, but finally decided to collect a few opinions about it from the teachers, students and Centre workers. These are reported in this section, but the reader should keep in mind that the opinions only relate to the Centre as it was defined for the two years of this study.

The Teachers' Opinions about CONTACT Centre

Many of the teachers seemed uncertain and/or dissatisfied about the role of CONTACT Centre and its relationship to the school. However, at the same time, most seemed to feel that the Centre could contribute a great deal to the school and suggested a number of interesting ideas for improvement.

For the two years of the study, the teachers saw the Centre as primarily involved with student attendance meaning that the workers were to find out why students were away from school and to do the necessary counselling to improve the students' attendance. The teachers also saw the counselling

aspect of their work extending beyond the problems associated with poor attendance to those connected with finding jobs, finding living accommodation, identifying goals, career planning, dealing with various agencies and institutions, etc. Secondly, and to a lesser extent, the teachers saw the workers as a liaison between the school and the community, that is, the workers keep in touch with community groups and activities, help find speakers for the speakers' hour, explore other educational options for the students, etc. Thirdly, the workers were involved with extra-curricular activities such as dances, skiing, roller skating, etc. (One worker had organized a small music group which performed around the community). Fourthly, the workers sometimes functioned as street workers in the sense that they would look for young people "hanging out" in various places with nothing to do and encourage them to attend school (this role was more typical of the Centre in previous years). Fifthly, in a couple of instances, teachers had obtained the help of the workers in the actual process of teaching. And finally, the workers had three votes at the staff meetings and the general meetings.

While this list of duties sounds impressive and the teachers mostly agreed that these things should be done by the Centre, they were concerned because the work was not being done in a consistent fashion and because the quality of work varied greatly with the individual workers.

When asked how the work of the Centre could be improved, the teachers tended to stress the following ideas. It is interesting to note that all these suggestions imply that the Centre should be closely related to and involved with the school, whereas no such component was conceived of in the original proposal for CONTACT.

- Many teachers felt that the school should be part of the community (not an escape from the community) and that the

tying together of school and community could be most effectively done by the Centre workers. One teacher spoke of having "resource researchers" to identify elements of the community to use in CONTACT's academic program. Others felt the workers should be deeply involved with helping students deal with the community, learn about the community and contribute to the community.

- Several teachers felt that attendance follow-up was essential. Originally, this had been the responsibility of the teachers, but many seemed to favor the idea of the Centre workers doing the job and doing it in a much more intensive fashion. (One teacher did not believe in attendance follow-up, saying that poor attendance would not be a problem if the program of the school better met the students' needs).
- Many students need jobs either while they are enrolled at CONTACT or when they leave and they are often very naive about finding them. Some teachers felt that the Centre workers could and should contribute a great deal in that respect.
- At least one teacher felt that CONTACT needed someone to "blow its horn" or, in other words, to advertise and improve its reputation among educators and administrators.
- A couple of teachers mentioned a more abstract idea. They felt that the Centre workers should reinforce what is taught in the curriculum, particularly with respect to life skills and student rights.
- One teacher thought the entire school should function more like the Centre and that the concept of formal teaching was irrelevant. In the same vein, another teacher felt the Centre should be involved with the entire program of the school.
- The teachers generally agreed that the Centre should be involved with counselling and guiding students.

The Students' Answers to Questions About CONTACT Centre

The interviewers asked 130 students the question, "What do you think of CONTACT Centre?" -- 98 of these students had been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT and 32 had been on probation only. Their responses are given in Table 89. Many of the students (43%) knew nothing about the Centre and had had no involvement with the workers. However, the majority of those students who had been involved with the Centre, reported positive experiences and praised the workers.

The interviewers also asked 57 students the question, "Have you been involved with CONTACT Centre since you left the school?" -- 25 of these students had been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT and 32 had been on probation only. Most of these students (83%) replied that they had not been involved with the Centre after leaving CONTACT.

TABLE 89

STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO YOU THINK OF CONTACT CENTRE?"  
(N = 130)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Don't Know (wasn't involved with them, don't know them)	56	43.1%
Good/positive experiences (they care a lot, get involved, help a lot, phone you when you are away)	53	40.8%
Poor/negative experiences (poorly run, just there to get paid)	15	11.5%
Very little involvement	6	4.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

CONTACT Centre Workers

For the two year period of this study, five workers were employed by the Toronto Board of Education at CONTACT -- there was a turnover of two workers the second year. The investigators interviewed all five workers and collected the following information and opinions.

Selected Characteristics of the Centre Workers

At the time of the interviews, the workers were all 30 years of age or younger -- the youngest worker was 23. Three of the workers were men. Only one worker spoke a language in addition to English -- he spoke Ukrainian and Russian. When asked why they took the job at CONTACT Centre, most said it was because they needed a job. One felt the job would be particularly interesting and challenging, while another wanted the job because CONTACT was an alternative, political school.

Four of the five workers had obtained a high school diploma; one had dropped out in grade twelve. Three had received their high school education in Toronto, one in Kingston and one in Eastern Canada.

Three of the five workers had obtained a university degree and two had done some work at the graduate level. One had a teacher's certificate, one had obtained a few credits from a community college, and one had training in the area of social service work from a community college.

In brief, the related work experience of the five workers was as follows:

- (1) Volunteer work with children.
- (2) Four years of social service work in a large city.
- (3) Volunteer work in an Ukrainian community and union work at FORD.
- (4) Work with battered children and battered wives.
- (5) High school and community college teaching, teacher's aid work and experience as a director of a street service.

Some Opinions of the Centre Workers

The school year, 1977-78, was the first year that CONTACT Centre was located in the school. The workers were employed by the Toronto Board of Education. It was also the first year of this study. That year, the Centre employed three workers (two left and were replaced the following year) -- one worker was a co-ordinator. Also, that year, the Centre began to be more involved with CONTACT School than it had been in the preceding years.

The investigators asked the five workers several questions about the role of the Centre, the relationship of the Centre to CONTACT School, their contribution and how their contribution could be improved.

There were difficulties. The remark of one worker, "This job has crept into the school through the back door," nicely described the main reason CONTACT Centre was experiencing a variety of difficulties during the two years of this study. Shortly before the three workers were interviewed during the first year of the study, the staff of CONTACT and the workers had attempted to sort out the difficulties by drawing up a paper to define how the workers should relate and contribute to the school. In order of priority, the workers' responsibilities were to be:

- (1) Attendance
- (2) Counselling (guidance, direction, support)
- (3) Liaison with the community (bring community resources into the school program, maintain communication with other schools, keep informed about agencies and activities in the community, introduce people to the school, etc.)

However, most of the workers felt that the Centre was not following the paper closely and in an integrated manner. There seemed to be a problem in deciding the responsibilities of each individual worker -- they talked of not having good job definitions accompanied by review procedures for hiring staff, probation terms, follow-up and evaluation. The morale of the workers

also seemed to be low because of poor pay, short-term contracts and inadequate work space. And further, they implied that several of the staff as well as the workers had become overly emotional about the whole issue, thus making it even more burdensome to find rational solutions.

When the five workers were asked to describe their contribution to CONTACT School, the resulting list of activities was lengthy and included:

- Attendance (daily follow-up of students who are absent)
- Counselling (attendance problems, birth control, career planning, etc.)
- Extra-curricular activities (CONTACT School Travelling Music Show, sports, yoga, etc.)
- Recruitment\* (booths, posters, phone calls, Thursday noon hour information centre, etc.)
- Administration of volunteer work programs (Harbour Front, etc.)
- Helping in teaching courses (biology, exploring Toronto, post secondary education options, etc.)
- Community liaison work (knowledge of community and people in community, community meetings, inter-agency functions, source of information about jobs, schools etc.)
- Public relations work in other schools
- Plan speakers' hours, tutorial weeks and seminars (e.g., a job employment seminar run by Youth Employment Services to train students how to look for jobs).
- Follow-up students who have left CONTACT
- Sincere interest in the philosophy of the school.

The investigators also asked the workers a few other questions of a more general nature. First, they were asked to describe what they liked and disliked about working at CONTACT. Several said they like the teaching staff because they are easy to work with, co-operative and very much involved with

\* The workers had originally been called streetworkers and were supposed to recruit students from pool halls, etc. However, they no longer functioned in that way. One worker referred to that method of recruitment as "obsolete." One teacher felt that the method which had been picked up from United States was not appropriate for Canadian students because they reject the notion of being solicited on the streets. That teacher also felt the community could not be thought of as a "jungle" and consequently it was wrong for the street-workers to go out and fetch students with the message that they should try to escape from the "jungle" by returning to school. He felt that, in reality, the students want to and should identify with and learn to live in the community.

the students. Several said they liked the students because they are bright, aware, and "streetwise". Several reported they like the atmosphere because it is relaxed. One worker liked the location and another liked the job because it provided the chance to be creative in a socially useful situation. In addition to disliking the pay, work space, short contracts and poor job definitions, the workers tended to be critical of the administration of the school. They made such comments as:

"The school should revise its overall aims and goals."

"There are critical administrative problems in the school. There is a split down the middle. There is no one to make the final decisions. This has a detrimental effect on the school."

"There is a conflict within the staff about the philosophy and role of the school."

"The difficulties in interacting with the bureaucracy of this school are a result of the philosophy which is also a function of the personnel."

"The ambiguous philosophy with its varied interpretations is hard to work with."

"The lack of an administrative head makes it difficult. They need to rethink how an administrative head could be fit into the philosophy of the school."

Secondly, the workers were asked to delineate the characteristics of CONTACT which they felt affected students favourable. They particularly mentioned: (1) the relationship between the teachers and students; (2) the relaxed, co-operative atmosphere; (3) the non-repressive attitudes and (4) the freedom to make decisions about whether or not to participate in various elements of the program.

And finally, the workers were asked to point out things about CONTACT which they felt should be changed because they affect students unfavourable. They mentioned: (1) the lack of direction for the students; (2) the unwillingness to "weed out" or discourage students who are abusing the philosophy of the school;

(3) the indecision about the school's role among the staff; and (4) the lack of firmness.

Summary and Discussion

When this study began, CONTACT Centre was in a process of beginning to be recognized as a formal, integrated part of CONTACT School. The Centre had just physically moved into the school, the workers had just begun to be paid by the Toronto Board of Education and the struggles to define the Centre's relationship to the school were obvious.

There was a strong feeling among both teachers and Centre workers that there is a potential for CONTACT Centre to make large and important contributions to the school. The areas most frequently suggested as possible responsibilities were: (1) attendance, (2) counselling, (3) community liaison, and (4) resource persons for academic courses.

However, both teachers and workers expressed frustration because the Centre was not realizing that potential. Various factors such as poor pay tended to keep the morale of the workers low; the jobs of the individual workers were ill-defined; and the roles of the Centre and personal relationships of preceding years hampered the rational development of a new, effective plan for the Centre.

Many of the students had had no involvement with the Centre. Of those who had been involved, most described positive experiences.

### CASE STUDIES

When the investigators presented their proposal for the evaluation of CONTACT School to the staff in the fall of 1977, one teacher suggested that the evaluation would be made more valuable and interesting by doing a few case studies. The investigators agreed and immediately outlined a strategy, in consultation with the teachers, for the selection of the students to be studied in depth.

The investigators and teachers agreed that it would be interesting to study two students randomly selected from all those students falling under each of the following five classifications:

1. Students who had entered CONTACT directly from another school in January 1978.
2. Students who had not attended any other school for at least six months before entering CONTACT.
3. Students who had not attended any other secondary school.
4. Students who had attended CONTACT the previous year.
5. Students over nineteen years of age.

Ten students were thus identified and the investigators attempted to follow them from January 1978 to June 1979 and interview them in depth four or five times in order to put together a history of each student's experiences with CONTACT School. The students' names are fictitious.

JOAN -- had entered CONTACT directly from another school in January 1978

Joan was born in Ontario, learned to speak English first and was living with both parents. Her father was a mechanic and her mother did laundry.

Joan had attended a regular Toronto high school for a year and a half but was unhappy with it because, "there are too many subjects; there were bad, strict teachers; there was too much homework; I did not attend often."

One day a friend told Joan about CONTACT and she registered in January 1978. When Joan was interviewed one month later, she was very happy with CONTACT. She said, "the teachers are more tolerant, the students are more vocal and free to come and go, the school is open, you can work at your own pace, there is more time for English and mathematics, you can work when you want, and there is only one subject in the afternoon." Joan reported that she had taken law, psychology, human sexuality and gone on some field trips.

Joan's scores on the evaluation instruments were as follows:

Vocabulary.....	6.6
Reading Comprehension.....	7.2
Mathematics Concepts.....	5.5
Mathematics Problem Solving.....	5.5
Self-concept.....	62.0 (she scored lowest on the school subscale)
Life Skills.....	9.5
Social Skills.....	123.8

During February, March and April, Joan studied history, short stories and consumer education. She got a credit in history. In English, she had worked on a book report and comprehensions. She felt she had made little progress in English but added, "It is better than in the other schools. The teacher doesn't lecture. I like working on my own. The materials are interesting." She said she wasn't doing mathematics because she didn't want to learn metric. She had not been involved in any extra-curricular activities and had not gone on any field trips. She voiced the following concern, "Everybody is changing for the worse -- they are attending less often because it is the end of the year and the weather is nice."

During the June interview, Joan reported that she had improved a little in her reading, but had remained the same in her writing and mathematics. The reason she gave for improving in reading was, "I am reading more books -- I never used to read before." She said she hadn't improved in the other two areas because she didn't like the subjects.

Joan reported that CONTACT had helped her a little with her self-confidence, but had made no difference in her self-discipline (it is up to the student) and in her ability to get along with others (she had never had any trouble getting along before).

She felt she had learned a little about citizens' rights (law courts and police) but nothing about social issues, the community or future educational and job opportunities. She said CONTACT had helped her to learn to study independently.

Joan sometimes felt free and sometimes felt restricted about expressing her opinions in CONTACT. She felt she had a little say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT but wished it were more. She thought the relationship between the students and teachers was O.K. and she sometimes felt relaxed and sometimes felt tense at CONTACT. She considered the amount of movement, discipline and structure at CONTACT to be about right. She felt she was getting enough individual attention at CONTACT. She wished they had facilities for tennis.

During the summer of 1978, Joan did a lot of travelling and looked for a job. She didn't find a job.

Joan returned to CONTACT the following school year after trying another Toronto high school for two or three weeks. She didn't like the teachers at the other school because, "They put me back in grade nine and made me do work I had done before." She hoped to improve her math enough to get into a regular grade eleven the next year. She said, "I am trying harder this year."

When Joan was interviewed for the last time in April 1979, she was attending CONTACT only in the morning and spending most of her time working on mathematics. She wanted to improve her mathematics enough to enter a grade eleven business course in another school for the next school year. She felt that she was making progress and was happy about CONTACT.

Her post-test self-concept score of 63.0 was essentially unchanged.

Her post-test C.T.B.S. scores showed that she had definitely improved in mathematics.

Vocabulary.....	6.9 (gain of 0.3)
Reading Comprehension.....	7.4 (gain of 0.2)
Mathematics problem solving.....	7.8 (gain of 2.3)
Mathematics concepts.....	6.9 (gain of 1.4)

Her post-test score on the life-skills questionnaire of 14.0 indicated an improvement in her knowledge in that area. And, her post-test score for social skills of 124.0 was unchanged.

Joan's school records showed that she had attended five elementary schools and one regular high school at level 3. She had obtained seven high school credits at the regular high school and about one at CONTACT.

JOHN -- had entered CONTACT directly from another school in January 1978

John was born in Newfoundland and learned to speak English first. At the time of this study, he was living in a group home in Scarborough; he had behavioral problems. He had transferred to CONTACT after Xmas from a high school in a small Ontario town near Toronto where he had been in grade nine. John's brother was also at CONTACT and was the one who had recommended the school to John.

John didn't think that CONTACT would be different from other schools except that he hoped the teachers would be "more understanding."

A month after registering at CONTACT, John reported that it was better than he had expected because "there are only three subjects a day and you have more freedom -- you can say what you want." There was nothing he disliked.

John's CTBS and self-concept scores were relatively low:

Vocabulary.....	4.2
Reading Comprehension.....	6.9
Mathematics Concepts.....	4.4
Mathematics Problem Solving....	6.0
Self-concept.....	47 (his score on the peer subscale was much lower than the others).

He did not complete the life-skills questionnaire and was not rated for social skills.

John's mood during the April 1978 interview was completely different. He seemed "spaced out." All he could say was "everything is boring, boring, boring." He had taken courses in health, family planning, sexuality and physical education, but had not obtained any credits because "I didn't go much."

In English, he had done journals, crossword puzzles and comprehensions. He liked English, but didn't believe he had made any progress since January.

He wasn't doing mathematics because, "I just don't feel like doing it, I don't know why."

The only other comments he made about his school life since January were, "I was on the social committee for a school dance, I went on a good ski trip with the school and I visited a drugstore and a health clinic." He concluded by saying he would like to work on a farm.

John was still going to CONTACT in June, 1978. He felt that his reading and mathematics skills were still the same because "I am not interested." However, he said his writing had improved a little. He claimed that CONTACT had made no difference to his self-confidence, ability to get along with others or his self-discipline. He refused to elaborate on these topics.

John reported that he hadn't learned anything about citizens' rights, the community or future educational and job opportunities. However, he said he had learned a lot about social issues such as sexuality, unemployment and consumerism.

He said he had not learned to study independently because, "I already knew how."

John felt very free about expressing his feelings at CONTACT and did so whenever he felt like it, but added, "It is no freer than the other school."

He believed he had some say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT as a result of the general meetings but added, "The teachers have the final say."

The relationship between teachers and students was seen as O.K. by John. He said, "I got along better with the teachers at the previous school." He felt relaxed all the time at CONTACT.

He complained that there was too little movement allowed and too much discipline and structure. "I want to smoke and read the newspaper freely -- they make me work when I am supposed to be going at my own pace."

He said that most teachers gave him enough individual attention and that he was able to take the courses he wanted. He wished there was track and field.

John didn't really know how many credits he had earned. He wanted to leave CONTACT and get a job. He didn't like some of the teachers. He particularly wanted to work on a farm.

When John was interviewed in October 1978, he was living with his sister and looking for a job. He said he had been loading trucks for a while, but it ended. John was in a very angry, negative mood and said, "I am not in the mood for answering questions." He hung up.

John's situation was much the same in April 1979. He seemed to have a job and did not intend to go back to school. He was still very angry.

John was not available to complete the evaluation instruments during the spring of 1979 on a post-test basis.

John's school records showed that he had attended at least two elementary schools and one regular high school. He had obtained no high school credits either from the regular high school or CONTACT.

Jill -- had not attended any other school for at least six months before entering CONTACT

Jill had actually been out of school for two years before entering CONTACT in January of 1978. She had last attended a school in North York. During those two years, she had been doing nothing and she decided she probably needed more education so that she could get a job. A probation officer told her about CONTACT.

At first, Jill didn't think that CONTACT would be good because, "The kids smore and the school looked too small and out of shape." However, she thought the teachers would be understanding.

After attending the school for about a month, Jill felt that it was better than she had expected. She said, "It's good."

When asked what she liked about CONTACT, she said, "The teachers have more time for you and there is a longer lunch hour."

Her complaints were that the teachers should be stricter, the music was too loud, it was messy and the morning subjects (mathematics and English) lasted too long.

Jill's CIMS and self-concept scores were relatively low:

Mathematics concepts.....	3.9
Mathematics Problem Solving.....	4.2
Vocabulary.....	4.6
Reading Comprehension.....	7.4
Self-concept.....	48

(She scored highest on the peer subscale)

Jill left CONTACT three months after entering and could not be located for the April and June interviews and was not available in the fall of 1978 to complete the life skills questionnaire or to be rated on social skills.

Jill was interviewed again in October 1978. She had had a job for five months in a plant factory. She said she was supervising others and enjoyed it very much. She had also been attending an upgrading program at George Brown College since September. She hoped to work in a day care centre some day.

Jill said she had dropped out of CONTACT because, "It was boring and it did not help me at all." She had no plans for returning to school in the future.

The last interview with Jill took place in April 1979. She had changed jobs. She was working in another factory. She said she was lucky because, "I was never unemployed." She had dropped the mathematics upgrading course at George Brown College because, "It wasn't worthwhile." Jill said she had no intentions of returning to school because, "I am making good money now." She was planning to move to Florida to stay with friends. She had another factory job "lined up" there.

Her last comment about CONTACT was, "The kids have too much freedom."

Jill's school records indicated that she had attended five elementary schools and no regular high schools. She had obtained no high school credits from CONTACT.

JIM -- had not attended any other school for at least six months before entering CONTACT

During the 1975-76 school year, Jim attended a high school in Stobicote, was in grade nine and lived with his parents. However, in September 1976, his parents kicked him out of the house and he moved in with his brother who lived near CONTACT. He spent the time period from September to January looking for a job. He couldn't find a job and found himself becoming very bored. Then his probation officer told him about CONTACT and he registered in January 1977. Jim's brother had left so Jim had to go on student welfare (a worker at CONTACT helped him get on welfare).

Jim didn't really know what to expect of CONTACT but thought, "It would be like other schools." He said he would have liked to have gone one-half day to CONTACT and one-half day to another school for shop, but it didn't work out. He complained that, "New students sometimes get bugged at the beginning -- I did."

When he was asked during the February interview what he liked about CONTACT, he said, "They give me work at my own level. I couldn't keep up at the other school. There is more freedom -- if I don't feel like working, I don't have to. They give me individual attention."

When he was asked what he disliked about CONTACT, he said, "There should be a smoking area. There is too much talking out and swearing. I don't like doing sewing and other female things and there should be more time for reading."

Jim's scores on the evaluation instruments were low:

Vocabulary.....2.0  
Reading Comprehension.....2.9  
Mathematics Concepts.....4.0  
Mathematics Problem Solving....5.1  
Self-Concept.....28 (His scores were equally low on the family, peer and school subscales)

He was not available during the fall of 1978 to complete the life-skills questionnaire or to be scored on social skills.

At the time of the next interview (April 1978), Jim had developed a somewhat negative attitude about CONTACT. He had not obtained any credits and said, "The courses are stupid -- I would like to take gym." He said he wasn't interested in the reading course called "Cops and Robbers" which involved reading a variety of detective novels.

Jim felt that he had made some progress in English, liked it, but complained that he never had enough time to finish. He said he had been writing stories. The teacher would give him the beginning of a story and he would finish it.

In mathematics, he had been doing fractions, multiplication and division. He reported that he liked mathematics, but added, "I haven't made any progress because I've done it all before -- it is very easy."

Jim liked to go on field trips. He had been to the police museum, the KODAK place and various shows with his class. He had not been involved with any extra-curricular activities.

Jim couldn't name any good things or any unpleasant things that had happened to him during January, February and March at CONTACT.

During April, he was very concerned about a summer job. He said, "I am living on my own and my welfare will be cut off -- I want a steady job for the summer."

The April interview was the last time Jim was interviewed. Since he was not interviewed during June with the long, in-depth interview schedule, a great deal of information was not collected. Several attempts were made to find Jim during the next year. He could not be located. One person who knew Jim said, in a very drunken state, "I don't know where Jim is, but he is sure going to get it if he comes back here."

Jim's school records indicated that he had attended four elementary schools and one regular high school. He had never obtained any high school credits.

GARY -- had not attended any other secondary school

Gary was born in Dauphin and learned to speak English first. He lived with both parents. His father worked in a hospital and his mother looked after their home.

Before entering CONTACT, Gary had been in grade seven in a Toronto school, but was experiencing a great deal of trouble. He said, "I wasn't getting along -- I didn't like the teachers. I was fighting a lot. The school was too strict. Gym was compulsory. I stayed away a lot."

A social worker helped Gary get into CONTACT.

At the time of the first interview, Gary had been attending CONTACT for four months. He was very pleased. "I can call the teachers by their first names. I get breaks and I can eat in class. I can speak my mind and I get a say in what is happening. I can joke around with the teachers and they listen to what I say. I don't fight here -- no one bugs me and I don't bug anyone. I like the open setup. I like the field trips (art gallery, ballet, pioneer village, science centre, etc.) I like the general meetings because I know what is going on and there is good communication. There is no principal -- you can't be sent to the principal's office."

Gary's only complaint was that there were not enough desks.

Gary scored extremely low on the family subscale of the self-concept questionnaire. His total score was 43 (somewhat low). His CTBS scores were:

Vocabulary.....	5.7
Reading Comprehension.....	6.1
Mathematics Concepts.....	5.5
Mathematics Problem Solving.....	6.6

He was not available when the life-skills questionnaire was administered and the teachers rated him as 118.9 on social skills.

During February and March, Gary studied photography and participated in the English course called "Cops and Robbers."

Gary said he had made more progress in reading and writing than he had in the regular school. He felt he needed more work in spelling because "that's my weak spot."

Gary liked the system by which mathematics was taught. He had been studying fractions and graphing.

He had not been involved in any extra-curricular activities but had participated in several field trips such as the Science Centre, Pioneer Village, the Court House, the Police Museum, Trigger (a job placement centre) and a rally at Queen's Park.

He commented on the fact that fewer kids turn up when the weather gets nice.

When interviewed near the end of the 1977-78 school year, Gary reported that he had improved a lot in reading and mathematics and a little in writing. He elaborated by saying he read aloud a lot, did a lot of mathematics and could choose his own topics for writing.

He felt CONTACT had helped him a lot in learning to get along with others because, "I used to fight all the time -- I don't fight at all here."

He also felt CONTACT had helped him a lot with his self-discipline because, "I don't need the teacher's encouragement now."

His self-confidence had improved a little because, "I am improving in reading -- I read aloud a lot -- I used to be shy."

Gary told the interviewer that he had learned a little about citizens' rights, social issues, the community and future educational and job opportunities. In particular, he talked about studying tenants' rights, laws, courts, woman's rights, sexuality, racism and about visiting Trigger, the art gallery and the Science Centre. He described some movies he had seen about jobs and job hunting.

He felt that CONTACT had helped him to learn to study independently.

Gary said he felt free most of the time to express his opinions and felt he had about the right amount of say in making decisions and rules in CONTACT. He described the relationship between the teachers and students as good because, "You can call them by their first names -- they have parties at their houses -- they are like friends." He felt relaxed most of the time because of "the open area."

He was satisfied with the amount of movement, discipline and structure remarking, "Instead of suspending students, a charge can be made." He felt he got enough individual attention. He wished they offered a business course.

His final comments during the June interview were, "It is a good school -- it has really improved since I've been here."

Gary's next interview took place in December 1978. He had spent the summer at his sister's place in the country. He began the 1978-79 school year in a school in the country, but dropped out because, "I didn't know anyone -- it was too strict -- too structured -- you couldn't smoke." He then returned to CONTACT later in September but left since he was supposed to move back to his sister's place in the country. He spent the remainder of the time before Xmas babysitting for his sister in the country. Gary returned to CONTACT in January 1979.

While Gary was still on the school rolls during April and May of 1979, he was not attending and could not be contacted by telephone or mail. He did not take the CTBS, self-concept inventory or life skills questionnaire on a post-test basis. The teachers' post-rating of 120.0 on his social skills was approximately the same as the pre-rating.

Gary's school records indicated that he had attended two elementary schools and no other secondary school. He had obtained no high school credits.

DICK -- had not attended any other secondary school

Dick was a native Canadian who was born in Canada and spoke only English. He lived with his mother who collected mother's allowance.

Dick entered CONTACT in June of 1975. He had been in grade eight in a Toronto School but left because, "I wasn't getting anywhere -- I felt too boxed in -- I didn't get along with the teachers or the principal." A teacher at that school helped Dick get into CONTACT.

Dick still liked CONTACT after attending for three years. "I can walk to school. It's clean -- nice carpeting. The teachers are good. You can call the teachers by their first names. The teachers dress informally -- the way they like. I have lots of friends here."

He had few dislikes. "The subjects are too short. I don't like the judging system -- some people are abusing it. It is a bit noisy because of the open structure but it has a relaxed feeling." He expressed some concern about his age. "The kids seem younger now."

Dick's self-concept score of 64 was quite high. His CTBS scores were:

Vocabulary.....	7.9
Reading Comprehension.....	5.4
Mathematics Concepts.....	4.4
Mathematics Problem Solving...	7.3

His score of 33 on the life-skills questionnaire was well above average while his score for social skills of 111.5 was about average.

During February and March, Dick took art and crafts, drawing and physical education. He said he enjoyed them all. He hadn't received a credit in any of them because he hadn't completed the assigned work.

Dick didn't seem too enthusiastic about his English and mathematics. "I don't know why I don't like the English program. I find the mathematics boring. I'm not doing my work. It's my fault, not the school's fault."

He had not been involved in any extra-curricular activities but had gone on a few field trips. He liked a ski trip.

He expressed concern about some vandalism which had occurred in the school.

Dick was next interviewed in June of 1978. Since beginning at CONTACT, Dick felt his reading had improved a little, his writing had improved a lot and his mathematics had gotten worse. "I am not interested in mathematics. I don't do it and they don't pressure me. My writing improved a lot because they check the errors -- their standards are very high -- the journals and comprehensions are good."

Dick felt that CONTACT had helped him a lot with his self-confidence and his ability to get along with others. "I feel free to say what I want at school. They helped me to look at myself -- I understand myself a bit better. Everybody is friendly and gets along well. The field trips are good."

He felt that CONTACT had not helped him with his self-discipline. "It is my fault I sleep in -- it is not their responsibility."

Dick believed that he had learned a lot about social issues at CONTACT, particularly human sexuality, family planning and advertising and a little about citizens' rights, particularly Indian rights and police.

He said he had learned a little about the community and mentioned art stores, museums and the Harbour Front. He felt he had learned nothing about future educational and job opportunities and added, "A lot of people come and go in school with no real counselling or help with goals."

Dick felt that CONTACT had not really helped him to learn to study independently. "The school should give more guidance and counselling."

Dick said he felt very free to express his opinions at CONTACT. "It is a very democratic school -- the general meetings are good -- the teachers don't hassle you." He felt he had a lot of say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT. The teachers talk it over and the students look at it."

He described the relationship between the teachers and students as "excellent". "The classes are much smaller than in a regular school."

Dick reported that he sometimes felt relaxed and sometimes felt tense at CONTACT. He said he had been feeling tense because, "During the last two months, I haven't been getting anywhere."

He felt there was too much movement allowed in the school and too little discipline and structure. "Discipline is the major factor that is lacking."

Dick said he would like more individual attention. "The teachers might not notice that I am not working and might not even care." He wished he could study woodworking, auto mechanics and play basketball at CONTACT.

He was looking for a job for the coming year.

Dick stayed in Toronto for the summer. He wanted a job but didn't look because, "I knew I wouldn't get one." "I didn't enjoy the summer. It was the worst summer I ever had. Nothing happened."

He went back to CONTACT in September 1978. He said he was glad to be back because of the summer. "I was glad to see all the people here again."

During the fall, he studied life skills and physical education. He liked some of the new students and felt more comfortable with the new arrangement of classes. "It feels more relaxed and spacious this year." There was nothing he disliked. "The teachers and kids are about the same." He wasn't sure whether he would remain in CONTACT for the entire school year.

Dick was still at CONTACT in the spring of 1979 and during the May interview said that he had been in fairly regular attendance all year. He said that he had taken and obtained credits in 2 or 3 physical education courses, a geography course and a kiting course.

Dick reported that he was seriously looking for a full-time job and did not intend to return to CONTACT in the fall. He expressed concern about what he had achieved at CONTACT and wondered whether he would have been better off in another school learning a trade.

Dick was retested with the CTBS tests and the self-concept inventory. His CTBS scores were as follows:

Vocabulary.....8.1 (gain of +0.2)  
Reading Comprehension.....7.5 (gain of +2.1)  
Mathematics Concepts.....8.2 (gain of +0.9)  
Mathematics Problem Solving.....7.3 (gain of +2.9)

He had perhaps achieved more at CONTACT than he realized.

His total self-concept score (57) was a bit lower than it had been 15 months earlier. The change was not associated with any one subscale but was spread over all subscales.

His life-skills post-test score of 25 was lower than the pre-test score. The teachers rated him approximately the same on his social skills with a score of 109.3.

Dick's school records indicated that he had attended four elementary schools and no other high schools. He had obtained approximately six credits during his four years at CONTACT.

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LOUISE -- had attended CONTACT the previous year

Louise was born in Ontario, learned to speak English first and lived with both parents. Her father worked in a sewing mill and her mother did cleaning.

Before entering CONTACT, Louise had been in grade seven in a Toronto school. She didn't like the school, was absent a lot and felt old because she had failed twice. Her brother told her about CONTACT and her mother made the arrangements for her to get in.

When asked during the first interview what she liked about CONTACT, Louise said, "I like the breaks and the long lunch hour -- there is no rotary system. I can work at my own time and my own pace. I like the open structure -- there is lots of space. It is easy to get help from the teachers -- they don't bitch. I like my friends. I like the courses on law and family planning."

Louise said she didn't like the strict attendance rules and had not expected the general meetings. She also thought the charging system was stupid because, "Anybody charges anybody." She complained about the crossword puzzles and book reports because, "I don't like reading." She wasn't getting credits in the afternoon courses because, "I don't like them."

Louise objected strongly to doing the CTBS testing; she completed only two of the subtests and her scores were low:

Vocabulary.....3.5  
Mathematics Problem Solving....4.6

Her score on the self-concept questionnaire was moderately high (61); she scored much lower on the school subscale than the other subscales.

On the life-skills questionnaire, she scored 19.0 and on the social skills, the teachers rated her as 115.5. Both scores were average scores.

During February and March, Louise took family planning, human sexuality, short stories and art. In English, she had done assignments in punctuation and studied short stories. She said, "I don't like reading, I hate it." In mathematics, she had studied integers, but didn't feel that she had made any progress.

She had not been involved in any extra-curricular activities and had gone on only one field trip (to an art store).

Louise described one unpleasant thing which had happened to her during February and March. "I got accused by teachers for being on drugs -- nothing happened. The teachers decided not to call my parents." Some good things were that, "The school got a juice machine and a new basketball net."

In June, Louise felt that her reading and mathematics had improved a little and that her writing had improved a lot. She said her writing had improved because she had been "doing a lot of stories and journals."

Louise thought that CONTACT had helped her a little with her self-confidence because, "I feel better about speaking in front of a group." She said she had been helped a lot in getting along with others because, "I never used to talk to students at the old school -- the students here are not stuck-up." She also felt she had been helped a little with her self-discipline.

She reported that she had learned a lot about citizens' rights and social issues. In particular, she mentioned dealing with police, dealing with lawyers, how to demonstrate, how to strike, women's liberation and the things which influence prices.

She said she had learned nothing about the community because, "I don't like going on trips." And, she had learned a little about future educational and job opportunities -- especially how to fill out job applications.

Louise reported that CONTACT had helped her to learn to study independently and added, "I like working on my own; I work at home."

Louise felt free most of the time to express her opinions in CONTACT and felt she had a great deal of say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT. She thought the relationship between the teachers and students in CONTACT was O.K. "Some students and teachers get along, some don't."

Sometimes she felt tense and sometimes she felt relaxed in CONTACT. "I feel tense when the teachers argue with me."

Louise felt the amount of movement allowed in CONTACT was about right. However, with respect to the amount of discipline and structure, she was still complaining about the charging system. "It's stupid -- students shouldn't have the right to punish another student -- you can get charged so easily -- some teachers charge too often for silly things."

She thought she was getting enough individual attention. She regretted that there were no classes in cooking, typing and gym.

Louise spent the summer of 1979 travelling in Ontario and Eastern Canada with friends. She had a job for a very short time but quit because she didn't like the work or the boss.

She returned to CONTACT in September and attended for the entire 1978-79 school year. During the fall, she took health education, law, life skills, physical education, guitar, mathematics and English. She was glad to be back at CONTACT. She liked the new system of three classes in the morning and the new physical setup of more distinct class areas. There was nothing she disliked about CONTACT. She felt her reading was improving, but claimed she still hated it. She was happier than she had been the previous year.

When interviewed for the last time in April 1979, Louise felt she had improved in reading and mathematics and said she had definitely enjoyed a cooking class and a skiing trip. She still complained about the charging system and still felt all schools were boring. "However," she added, "if I have to be in school, CONTACT is the best school there is."

She was still living with both parents, had no job and had no plans for the coming year.

Louise's post-test CTBS scores indicated that she had indeed improved in her vocabulary and mathematics:

Vocabulary.....4.8 (gain of 1.3)  
Mathematics Problem Solving.....8.2 (gain of 3.6)

Her post-test self-concept, life-skills and social skills scores were essentially the same as the pre-test scores.

Louise's school records indicated that she had attended four elementary schools and no other secondary schools. She had obtained about six credits from CONTACT.

GEORGE -- had attended CONTACT the previous year

George was born in Florida and learned to speak English first. At the time of this study, he was living on his own and receiving some financial support from Children's Aid.

George had previously attended a Toronto elementary school and was dead set against going to a regular Toronto high school because, "There are too many people and the schools are too big." A vice-principal helped him get into CONTACT.

He expected CONTACT to be "a free, unstructured school where you aren't forced into doing things." When asked if CONTACT was what he had expected, he said, "It was last year, but not this year. Last year the teachers and pupils were equal, but this year the teachers are on a power trip. There are too many rules, the school is going structured." George was reluctant to be interviewed and seemed to have some very strong, bitter feelings about CONTACT.

George flatly refused to take the CTBS tests. His total self-concept score was average (58), although his score on the school subscale was very low. George obviously felt unsure about his academic abilities.

He also refused to complete the life-skills questionnaire. The teachers gave him a score of 116 on social skills.

When interviewed in April 1978, George felt he had made a bit of progress in English and said he liked the English program.

He wasn't doing mathematics because, "I don't need it; I know all I need to know in basic mathematics."

George had become part of the school's music group (he played the guitar) which got together after school and performed in public occasionally. The group was led by one of the Centre workers.

He hadn't been on any school trips because, "I don't like school trips."

George felt that some students and teachers were making CONTACT undesirable by abusing the judiciary system. He also wished that CONTACT had more to offer in gym, instrumental music and library. He complained about the credit system, "You should be able to get a full credit for each course."

During the June interview, George felt that he had improved a little in reading, stayed the same in writing and was not as good as he used to be in mathematics (he hadn't done it for over a year). He felt mathematics should be made more relevant.

He felt that CONTACT had made no difference in his self-confidence and ability to get along with others. However, he said that the school had helped him a lot with self-discipline because, "Having the freedom, you have to use it with self-discipline."

George reported that he had learned a little about citizens' rights, the community and future educational and job opportunities. In particular, he mentioned street law, the Youth Employment Agency, and the Ontario College of Art.

He said he had learned a lot about social issues and referred to human sexuality, racism, women's rights and consumerism.

He said that CONTACT had "very much" helped him to learn to study independently.

George felt very free about expressing his opinions at CONTACT. He thought he had a little say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT but felt the students "should have an equal say."

The relationship between the teachers and students was described by George as, "O.K. — it depends on the teacher." He again complained about there being too much charging and too much use of the judiciary system. He said, "There should be more communication to work things out."

George usually felt relaxed at CONTACT because "of the free atmosphere."

He felt that the amount of movement around CONTACT was about right and that there could be a bit more "academic structure."

He said he got enough individual attention at CONTACT. He suggested that CONTACT needed more courses on "street skills" and football, basketball and hockey equipment. He wanted a more "democratic" system.

George did not return to CONTACT in the fall of 1978 and the investigators were unable to locate him during October for an interview. His caseworker said he was taking dancing classes and looking for a job. He said it was difficult for George because, "He is very shy and the job market is tight."

George's school records indicated that he had attended two elementary schools and no other secondary schools. He had obtained about four credits while at CONTACT.

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MIKE -- over nineteen years of age

Mike was born in Hong Kong and learned to speak Cantonese first. He spoke and understood English with some difficulty. He lived with both parents -- his father worked in a Chinese restaurant and his mother was at home.

Mike at attended Literary College in Hong Kong to about a grade ten level. He worked for a while after coming to Canada and then decided he wanted to learn more mathematics, English, biology, physics, chemistry and art and then perhaps go to an art school. So his aunt phoned the Toronto Board of Education and, with the aid of a translator, he was placed at CONTACT so that he could brush up on various things. The placement officer felt his standards were not high enough to go to community college.

Mike's CTBS scores on the mathematics subtests were higher than the other subtests. For mathematics concepts he scored at a grade level of 9.2 and for mathematics problem solving, 9.5. On the vocabulary subtest, he scored 7.7 and on the reading comprehension subtest, 6.0.

Mike's score of 44 on the self-concept questionnaire was a fairly low score. He scored lowest on the peer subscale and highest on the family subscale.

He was not attending in the fall of 1978 when the life-skills and social skills questionnaires were administered.

The interview sessions with Mike were difficult because of his poor English. He did not understand some concepts and probably misinterpreted others.

When asked what he liked about CONTACT, Mike said, "I like learning things about myself. I like learning subjects. I like having only a few subjects each day. I like Canadian geography, Canadian history, civics, environmental science, social science, music and the library. I like the teachers -- they explain things -- they help me to learn how to talk -- they help me do assignments. I like my classmates -- we talk to each other and learn about different countries."

When asked what he disliked about CONTACT, he said, "There should be more sports and music. Some students smoke too much. Some students make too much noise and destroy things. They are making bad habits."

Mike's attitude during the April 1978 interview was very positive. He said he had obtained credits in Canadian history, Canadian geography, social science, environmental science and music. He spoke highly of the courses and said he particularly like learning about native people, Canadian government, Quebec, personality, pollution and the guitar."

In English, he had been doing creative writing and newspaper writing. He had been working on grammar and punctuation and felt he had improved a bit in everything. He said, "I like the way they teach English."

He had completed several units of mathematics and was working on polynomials. He said, "I have done some of it before, so it is sometimes easy. I like the way they teach mathematics -- I like the teacher."

Mike had not been involved in any extra-curricular activities and had not gone on any trips with the school.

He was disturbed by the destructiveness of some of the students, felt it was sometimes too noisy and felt CONTACT should accept more students. In addition, he suggested that CONTACT needed a better library, a juice machine, a projector screen in a large seminar room and a basketball net.

Mike was still at CONTACT during the June 1978 interviews. He felt he had improved a little in reading, writing and mathematics. He said, "It depends on yourself if you want to improve."

He felt his self-confidence had improved a little at CONTACT because, "The teaching method is good."

Mike said CONTACT had helped him a little in learning how to get along with others because, "Playing and talking with other people is good."

His self-discipline was a little better but, "It is mainly up to the student, not the school."

He had learned a little about citizens' rights.

He hadn't as yet learned anything about social issues, but would like to learn "all."

Mike felt he hadn't learned anything about the community, but said, "I would like to learn to co-operate with other people in the city -- to get people helping people in the community -- to learn about multiculturalism."

Mike thought he had learned a little about future educational and job opportunities. He mentioned the speakers who had come and talked about how to find jobs. He wanted to learn more.

He believed CONTACT had helped him to learn to study independently.

He sometimes felt free and sometimes felt restricted about expressing his opinions at CONTACT and felt that he had some say in making the decisions and rules.

He was unsure about the quality of the relationship between the teachers and students. He added, "The students do crazy things and the teachers have to control them — sometimes the teachers and students talk peacefully — it depends on the teachers and students."

He reported that he sometimes felt relaxed and sometimes felt tense at CONTACT. He said he felt tense when the work was difficult or when the students were acting silly.

Mike suggested that there was too much movement around CONTACT. He felt it was disturbing.

He said he got enough individual attention and that he was getting the courses he wanted. He felt there should be much more in the line of sports equipment.

Mike discontinued his studies at CONTACT at the end of the 1977/78 school year. He had obtained about six credits.

During the 1978/79 school year, he was attending a level 4, 5 and 6 school where he was taking eight courses mostly in grade eleven. He was also in an ESL class (English as a Second Language class).

When interviewed in October of that year he wasn't sure he liked the big building and said he was having problems with courses which were heavily based on knowing the English language. He said he was not getting the individual attention he had received at CONTACT.

Mike believed that CONTACT had helped him break into the Ontario educational system because he had learned a lot of basic things about the system. He said he had learned a little about a lot of other things at CONTACT as well.

Mike was last interviewed during April 1979. He was 22 years old and still living at home — he explained that it was quite acceptable for Chinese people to live at home until they get married. He was still at the same school and hoped to get a couple of credits by the end of the year. He was still struggling with his language problems and said the ESL class had helped a bit. He felt he had learned quite a bit even though his marks were "bad." He was looking for a summer job and intended to return to the same school in the fall.

His final comments about CONTACT was that the school had helped him a bit. It had helped him in his English and it taught him how to study in Ontario. He felt that CONTACT needed more teachers and more facilities.

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LYNN -- over nineteen years of age

Lynn was born in Ontario and learned to speak English first. Both of her parents were alive but she lived with only her mother who supported them both with mother's allowance.

Lynn had attended a regular high school for two years. She said she did well the first year, but the second year she was frequently sick, skipped out a lot and finally quite during the teacher's strike. She had obtained four credits. After dropping out of school, she found herself living at home with no job but feeling that she would like to finish school. However, she was concerned about returning to school because she would be older than the other students. Her sister's probation officer told her about CONTACT and she registered in September of 1977.

Lynn was first interviewed during February 1978, about six months after entering CONTACT. At that time, she reported that the alternative school had turned out to be close to what she had expected. She said she particularly liked the law course and the writing workshop and appreciated finding out about colleges and universities. She felt that it was the only place she could pick up credits. When asked what she disliked about CONTACT, she said, "It is too noisy because of the open areas and there is not enough discipline; but, the kids would probably quit if there were more discipline." Lynn was also disappointed about the way mathematics was taught.

When interviewed during April and June of 1978, Lynn still felt that the school was noisy and felt it was because the school was letting in kids who were too young. She said, "It is like a zoo."

During February, March and April, she had taken three afternoon courses - history of art and music, anthropology and post secondary education. She had found history boring. She got a credit in post secondary education and described the course as "really good." "It helped me to decide about colleges, find out about requirements for mature students and learn about the transitional program at U. of T."

During the same three months, she had done the usual work in English (journals, comprehensions, etc.). She felt the word puzzles and games were too easy and wished there was more grammar, paragraph writing and essay writing.

She didn't think she had made much progress in English but felt she had always been good at it. Her CTBS vocabulary score was 10.5 while her reading comprehension score was 10.1. She couldn't name anything which would have helped her improve her reading, but felt more attention could have been paid to her faults in writing.

She had not done any mathematics because she had started high school before 1974 and it was not compulsory and because she didn't get along with the mathematics teacher. Her math problem solving score was 8.8.

The investigators did not get scores for Lynn on self-concept, life-skills or social skills.

During the same time, she had gone on a ski trip, visited several colleges, the Science Centre and the museum as part of her school activities. She couldn't name any good thing that had happened to her and was disturbed by an incident where a student had hit a teacher with clay.

She felt that CONTACT had made no difference in her self-confidence, commenting that, "Better teaching would have helped her academically and consequently improved her self-confidence."

She reported that CONTACT had made no difference in her ability to get along with others adding, "I have always been able to get along well with people."

She also felt that CONTACT had made no difference in her self-discipline. She said, "I have a hard time getting up in the mornings -- no one can help me with that."

She had learned a little about citizens' rights, particularly young people's rights.

She hadn't learned anything about social issues because she wasn't interested and hadn't taken any of those courses.

She hadn't learned anything about the community. Although she had visited the museum and Science Centre while at CONTACT, she had known about them before entering the school. D

She said CONTACT had not helped her to learn to study independently.

Since Xmas, she had felt fairly restricted about expressing her opinions particularly in relation to the school newspaper. She felt the drug issue had been handled badly. In fact, she felt the school newspaper was poor.

Lynn felt she had a little say in decisions and rules concerning CONTACT and was satisfied with that state of affairs.

She described the relationship between the teachers and students as "excellent." "It is personal, you can talk to teachers freely and call them by their first name -- the teachers are not so conservative."

At times Lynn felt tense at CONTACT, at other times relaxed. She felt tense when "the teachers get on my back."

Lynn did not like the noise and movement associated with the open plan arrangement of CONTACT. She also felt there was too little discipline. She particularly objected to the language the students used.

She felt she could have had more individual attention at CONTACT and wished the school had team sports.

Lynn left CONTACT in June of 1978. She did not intend to return and, at that time, had no other plans for the future.

For a short time after leaving CONTACT, she had a job with the army reserve. Later, she obtained a part-time job in the SUN mailing room which she still held in April 1979. At the time of the last interview (April 1979), Lynn was still living with her mother and still had no definite plans for the future. She felt that CONTACT had not helped her at all. She said, "I haven't set foot in CONTACT this year, but I heard that it is the same as last year."

Lynn's school records indicated that she had attended one elementary school and one other secondary school. She had about four high schools credits which she had obtained before she entered CONTACT.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

CONTACT is an alternative full-time academic secondary school operated by the Toronto Board of Education. It is designed for two groups of people:

- (1) those who have dropped out of school and now want to return; and
- (2) students who are attending other secondary schools, but who feel they are not benefiting from their programs.

In June of 1977, the School Programs Committee of the Toronto Board of Education received and approved a recommendation from the Report of the Patterns of Dropping Out Committee --

"...that the CONTACT School concept be evaluated to determine how it meets the needs of dropout students."

(page 12)

The committee felt that the evaluation would serve to (1) provide CONTACT School with valuable feedback, and (2) to identify elements of the CONTACT School concept which could be adopted by other schools to help meet the needs of dropout or potential dropout students.

The study, which was carried out over a period of two years, addressed, in particular, the following four questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the dropout students in CONTACT?
- (2) What are the needs of dropout students?
- (3) How does CONTACT attempt to meet the needs of dropout students as identified in (2) above?
- (4) Which elements of the program at CONTACT are successful in meeting the needs of dropout students?

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A large proportion of the CONTACT students were born in Canada (80%) and learned to speak English first (86%), meaning that they do not have the multicultural makeup which is typical of the rest of the school population in Toronto.

Approximately 44% of the students were living in a situation where they were being financially supported by some form of assistance and 40% were living with their mother only. In fact, only 18% of the students were living with both parents where one or both parents were working.

Close to 70% of the students were 15, 16 or 17 years of age when they first enrolled in CONTACT; close to 70% had attended three or more elementary schools; and, close to 70% had attended one or no other secondary school. Approximately 44% had obtained no credits from other high schools, while the others had obtained very few.

The most common reason the students gave for going to CONTACT was that they couldn't cope (they gave a wide variety of details) with the regular school system.

CONTACT students have a wide range of vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Their grade-equivalent scores on the CTBS tests ranged from grade one to grade twelve. For the vocabulary test, 53% scored at or above the grade eight level. For the reading comprehension test, 47% scored at or above the grade eight level.

Similarly, CONTACT students have a wide range of mathematics skills. Their grade-equivalent scores on the CTBS tests ranged from grade two to grade eleven. For the mathematics concepts test, 20% scored at or above the grade eight level. For the mathematics problem solving test, 38% scored at or above the grade eight level. Obviously, their mathematics skills are lower than their vocabulary and reading skills.

On the average, CONTACT students scored low on an evaluation instrument measuring self-concept. Their self-concept scores in the area of family relationships were particularly low and this is not surprising given the data about their families. They also tended to score low on self-concept associated with peer relationships. Interestingly, their school self-concepts were as high as those of the control group of regular grade nine students. The "Leaving School Early" students (Larter and Eason, 1978) also have low self-concepts. Such feelings of unworthiness which seem to be characteristic of students who cannot cope with the regular school system and want to leave it should be seriously considered by anyone who is working with dropout or potential dropout students.

Teachers and students of CONTACT, administrative personnel and trustees of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto, principals of feeder schools and various social agents were asked to identify needs of drop-out students which a school such as CONTACT should meet. The following six needs were most frequently identified and were chosen to form the focus of the evaluation. (Some of the needs are rather loosely defined.):

1. Basic academic skills (reading, writing and mathematics)
2. Social skills (self-confidence, getting along with others and self-discipline)
3. Life skills (knowledge of citizens' rights, knowledge of social issues, knowledge of community, knowledge of future educational and job opportunities and ability to study independently)
4. Democratic and relaxing atmosphere (freedom of expression, say in decision making, good pupil-teacher relationships, freedom of movement and proper amount of discipline and structure)
5. Individualization and flexibility (individual attention, suitable courses and suitable extra-curricular activities and sports)
6. Academic and/or employment advancement (credits and jobs)

In order to determine how and to what extent CONTACT meets the six needs of dropout students, data were collected by interviewing the students, teachers and Centre workers and by using a variety of evaluation instruments.

Table 90 is a summary of the students' opinions about how CONTACT meets their needs. The table has been organized by arranging the twenty-two key questions in the student interview schedule in order of percentage of students who responded positively. The questions beside which a  $\checkmark$  appears are those needs for which the results of an evaluation instrument suggested a positive change in the students after attending CONTACT for at least five months. The questions beside which a \* appears are those needs for which the results of an evaluation instrument suggested either no change or a negative change. It is interesting to note that the opinions of the students and the results of the evaluation instruments tend to suggest the same conclusions in several areas.

The data in Table 90 need considerable elaboration since a simple examination of the percentages of students who gave certain responses and a look at the order in which they have been arranged in the table do not tell the whole story.

The students say they get enough individual attention and learn to study independently at CONTACT.

The students felt that individual, friendly, personal attention from understanding teachers is very important and it is impressive that 88% of the students felt that CONTACT is meeting their needs in this area. The classes are small, the teachers constantly strive to attend to the students' needs on an individual basis and the morning classes of English and mathematics are completely individualized.

Almost as many students (81%) felt they had learned to study independently and many of the students said it was because the teachers give them

TABLE 90

A SUMMARY OF THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT HOW CONTACT SCHOOL MEETS THEIR NEEDS  
(N=98)

Question	Students' Response(s)	Percentage of Students (N=98)
1. Do you get enough individual attention?	Yes	88%
✓2. Have you learned anything about citizens' rights?	A Little/ A Lot	86%
3. Have you learned to study independently?	Yes	81%
✓4. Have you learned anything about social issues?	A Little/ A Lot	79%
5. Has your writing improved?	A Little/ A Lot	72%
6. Now that you have left CONTACT, are you working or continuing with your education? (N=58 students)	Yes	(about) 70%
✓7. Has your reading improved?	A Little/ A Lot	68%
✓8. Have you learned anything about the community?	A Little/ A Lot	67%
*9. Have you learned anything about getting along with others?	A Little/ A Lot	66%
*10. Has your self-confidence improved?	A Little/ A Lot	65%
11. How do you feel about expressing your opinions?	Free most of the time/Very free	65%
12. What do you think about the relationship between the teachers and students?	Good/Excellent	65%
13. How do you feel at CONTACT?	Relaxed most of the time/Very relaxed	63%
14. Have you learned anything about future educational and job opportunities?	A Little/ A Lot	60%
15. What do you think about the amount of discipline and structure?	About Right	58%
16. Does CONTACT provide you with the courses you want?	Yes	58%
17. How do you feel about the amount of movement that is allowed round the school during class time?	About Right	56%
18. Does CONTACT provide you with the extra-curricular activities and sports you want?	Yes	55%
*19. Have you improved in mathematics? 20% <sup>15</sup>	A Little/ A Lot	53%

...Continued...

TABLE 90

A SUMMARY OF THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ABOUT HOW CONTACT SCHOOL MEETS THEIR NEEDS  
(N=98)

Question	Students' Response(s)	Percentage of Students (N=98)
20. Has your self-discipline improved?	A Little/ A Lot	49%
21. Did you get the credits you planned to get?	Yes	25%
22. How much of a say do you have in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT?	A great deal	24%

individual attention, trust them, encourage them and show them their concern. This finding is most interesting, since learning to study independently might mean, to many people, that a student would be left to his own resources and experience minimal interaction with a teacher or that a student would be given a lot of freedom without teacher involvement. While a certain percentage of the students did, in fact, say that such freedom and lack of direction had taught them how to study independently, a larger number felt otherwise. The ability to study independently is, without a doubt, a valuable life skill and, once learned, probably improves a student's chances of being successful in school and in other aspects of life. Some students may need a period of time in their school lives when they receive individual attention, trust and concern in order to learn to study independently.

The implication of these findings for CONTACT Staff is that they should continue in the same vein.

These findings suggest one strategy which a school or a school system might adapt to meet the needs of potential dropout students. Potential dropout students could be identified at grades seven, eight and nine. (Several characteristics of dropout students have been discussed in this report.) The students could then be assigned to very small classes with carefully chosen teachers who

are understanding, friendly and concerned -- this could be done for the entire program or for part of the program. The program would be highly individualized with a great deal of attention from the teachers with a view to helping the students learn to study independently and with a view to providing the students with very personal guidance, encouragement and trust.

Most students become more knowledgeable about citizens' rights, social issues and the community while at CONTACT.

When the students were asked to describe what they had learned about citizens' rights, social issues and the community, they most frequently mentioned the following:

- How to deal with police/lawyers/ probation officers (arrest procedures, rights)
- Protests (reasons, procedures)
- Laws/street law
- People's rights (Indians, tenants, young people, women, senior citizens, students, immigrants, etc.)
- Government/politics
- Sexuality
- Racism
- Women's rights
- Unemployment
- Consumerism
- Museums
- Science Centre
- Art Galleries

The credit courses (many of which have been specially developed by the teachers), the speakers' hour, the general meeting, the school field trips, and the involvement with social issues and the community are the primary ways in which CONTACT School increases the students' knowledge of citizens' rights, social issues and the community.

Not many students wanted to learn more about citizens' rights, social issues and the community suggesting that the students are fairly satisfied with what CONTACT is doing in these areas. (A few students said they would like to

learn more about government, politics, law and women's rights.)

Most of the teachers also felt that the students improved their knowledge in these areas while at CONTACT, but several wondered whether that knowledge was used by the students to gain better control of their lives. The fact that many are working or continuing with their education after they leave CONTACT suggests that, in some way, students have gained better control of their lives as a result of being at CONTACT. Such causal relationships are, of course, very difficult to establish.

The implication of these findings for CONTACT Staff is that they should continue in the same vein.

Regular schools might find some of CONTACT's strategies useful in helping students become more knowledgeable in such areas.

One implication of these findings for the school system is that consideration might be given to putting more energy into curriculum development in these areas so that more students could benefit from such learning.

Students (functioning at any grade level) are likely to improve their reading and writing skills while at CONTACT.

The students were asked to elaborate on why they felt they had improved in their reading and writing. One explanation was given much more frequently than any other -- they attributed it to the fact that they do a lot of reading and writing at CONTACT. The students also spoke of the individualized program, the personal attention and encouragement, the freedom of choice of materials, the freedom of expression, the nature of the assignments, the work on fundamentals and the constructive criticism and guidance from the teachers.

The following sums up the teachers' description of how reading and writing are dealt with at CONTACT.

"The students in all the classes are encouraged to do a lot of reading and writing at their own level, with and about material they choose and are interested in, while proceeding at their own pace!"

The concept that spending a lot of time on reading and writing will improve the students' skills seems unsophisticated and ridiculously obvious, but the truth for many students is that they have attended school for several years and have not done a lot of reading and writing (one student said he had never read a book before, another said he wrote his first letter at CONTACT). Recent literature in the field of education has labelled this concept "time on task" and studies\* are showing that increased time on a task improves learning.

CONTACT's approach to teaching reading and writing to dropout students should definitely be continued.

Approximately 70% of the students who had left CONTACT were working or continuing with their education; and, about 50% of the students reported that they would like to learn more about educational and occupational opportunities.

While it is difficult to say whether students are working or continuing with their education after they leave CONTACT because CONTACT has given them the credentials to do so, has encouraged them to do so or has made them more aware of various educational and occupational opportunities, the study did find that students who had been on the permanent rolls of CONTACT and had left were much more likely to be working or continuing with their education after leaving CONTACT than students who had been on probation but had not been on the permanent rolls.

Students were asked whether they had learned anything about future educational and occupational opportunities at CONTACT -- 60% said they had learned a lot or a little. However, about half the students said they would like to learn more. In particular, they suggested they would like to learn more about how to find a job and keep a job.

\* In a paper entitled, "Explosion of a Myth: Quantity of Schooling and Exposure to Instruction, Major Educational Vehicles" by David E. Wiley and Annegret Harnischfeger, the authors conclude that achievement is directly determined by only two variables: total time needed by a pupil to learn a task and total time a pupil actively spends on a given learning task. All the other variables' influences, they say, are mediated through these factors. They also point out that the one variable which is most amenable to important policy modification is that of "Total Allocated Exposure Time."

A recent research study of students' attitudes to work and unemployment (Larter, FitzGerald and Friendly, 1979) found that students believe the schools should prepare them for the work world.

Thus, the findings of these studies suggest that the students are looking to the schools for guidance, preparation and training for the work world. Perhaps CONTACT and regular secondary schools should consider doing more for students in these areas. CONTACT has made a start by offering a credit course on post secondary education (which also includes topics related to the work world) and by exposing the students to various options through involvement with the community and as a result of the speakers' hour.

For the most part, students at CONTACT feel relaxed, feel free to express their opinions and have good relationships with the teachers.

The students are free to express their opinions at the general meetings and the smaller group meetings. The free, open atmosphere and the attitudes of the teachers contribute to that freedom of speech.

Many of the students said the relationship between the teachers and students is good because the teachers are helpful, understanding, respectful, friendly, committed and earthy. They also referred to the openness, freedom and good communication. The teachers talked of the favorable student-teacher ratio, the mutual respect and the freedom of expression as factors contributing to the good relationship.

The free, open atmosphere was also cited by the students as that element of CONTACT which made them feel relaxed. They said they felt relaxed also because they could work at their own pace, the teachers were not strict and the students were friendly.

Obviously, the maintenance of such an atmosphere depends on both teachers and students, but the personality, attitudes and characteristics of the teachers are extremely important. Not every teacher would want to or would be able to adjust to the demands of such a setting. 211

These findings suggest that CONTACT should continue in the same mode and that they should always select their new teachers very carefully.

The school system cannot afford to ignore such findings. A recent study of the "Leaving School Early" students (Larter and Eason, 1978) clearly showed that most of those students did not have good relationships with their teachers and did not communicate with them. In that study, 392 students were asked to say what their teachers felt about their leaving school. Here are some of their responses:

I didn't talk to them.....	46%
They didn't say anything/much.....	18%
I rarely saw the teacher(s).....	5%
I didn't tell them I was leaving.....	5%
They didn't care.....	3%
I can't remember/I don't know.....	<u>3%</u>

80% of 392 students

The most frequent reason the "Leaving School Early" students gave for leaving school was that they disliked school and were bored with it; and, teachers were frequently mentioned as the aspect of school they disliked.

Between 30% and 40% of the students at CONTACT want more discipline, more structure and less freedom of movement about the school.

CONTACT has not been able to establish a satisfactory approach to discipline, structure and movement about the school for two reasons; the students have different needs and the teachers cannot agree on what is best. That which suits some of the teachers and students will never suit the others. The problem is serious and raises such questions as:

1. Should attendance be compulsory?
2. Should there be a school head or principal?
3. How should the space be organized?  
Should it be open or closed?
4. Should there be more rules about lateness, moving around, smoking, drinking coffee, etc?

5. Should teachers place deadlines on assignments, etc?
6. Who should make the rules?
7. Is it possible to have more discipline and structure without sacrificing the other positive aspects of CONTACT?

One solution to the problem (which should be seriously considered) might be the establishment of another school very similar to CONTACT but with more discipline and structure. Teachers and students should then be allowed to choose the setting which best suits them or even change settings as their needs change. Without such a solution, there will continue to be a drain of the teachers' energies and resources and some of the students will continue to be affected detrimentally.

Several students would like to take courses which are not offered at CONTACT because equipment and materials are not available.

Business English, typing, shop, woodworking, mechanics, home economics, art, music, pottery, home nursing and child care and survival were all mentioned by more than one student.

Students at CONTACT would greatly benefit if materials and equipment could be made available to CONTACT for at least two or three of these courses. The other solution would be to locate CONTACT near another secondary school so that the facilities, equipment and specialized teacher skills of that school could be used.

Many of the students at CONTACT would like to be more involved with sports at the school.

Hockey, baseball and gymnastics were most frequently listed by the students.

CONTACT does not have much in the way of sports facilities and equipment, but it does have personnel who have the ability to conduct a sports program.

This situation should be corrected. The students would probably benefit from the kind of interaction with peers which sports provide. The Toronto Board of Education could provide CONTACT with the facilities, CONTACT could be located near another secondary school so that they could use the facilities of that school, or CONTACT could be located near some form of community resources which they could use.

CONTACT School's approach to teaching mathematics is helpful for approximately 50% of the students.

The program is completely individualized and at the pre-nine and grade nine levels comprises a series of worksheets which the students do in small units. The students studying above grade nine follow the regular Toronto Board of Education math program. Drill, memorization, encouragement, immediate marking, review and learning one concept at a time are the methods they believe in. The worksheets are designed to improve the students' reading skills as related to mathematics.

Many of the students who reported that they had regressed or stayed the same in their mathematics during their stay at CONTACT blamed it on the fact that they didn't like mathematics, didn't find it relevant or interesting or hadn't been doing it. Many teachers were also concerned about the reasons for teaching mathematics and the difficulties of coping with students who are hopelessly "turned off" on mathematics.

CONTACT should take note of the finding that about one-third of the students suggested that CONTACT could improve in the teaching of mathematics mostly by (1) more individual attention or more math teachers or (2) different program and materials.

The fact that a substantial proportion of these students and, no doubt, a substantial proportion of all dropout students, dislike mathematics and say they are not interested in it should be a point of concern for the school system. Is it possible to make the mathematics curriculum more relevant to

the lives of students? Is it possible to make mathematics more interesting? Does the traditional mathematics curriculum still make sense in an age when computers, calculators and micro-processors are rapidly becoming a part of our everyday lives?

Just 49% of the students thought their self-discipline had improved while attending CONTACT.

These students attributed their improvement to: (1) encouragement to improve, (2) the freedom which ultimately brings self-discipline, and (3) their liking for CONTACT.

The students who felt they had not improved or who felt they could be better helped to improve spoke of: (1) the need for more discipline, structure, challenge and pressure, and (2) the need for more motivation and positive reinforcement. Some students suggested that it is basically up to the student and that the school can do nothing to help.

To a certain degree, these findings reflect those found for the topics of discipline, structure and movement about the school. Students seem to have different needs and perhaps one school with a particular approach cannot meet the needs of all students in these areas.

Most of the students at CONTACT are aware that they do not have a great deal of say in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT.

CONTACT School is not run democratically by the students. The students are free to express their opinions in a variety of settings and to make recommendations to the teachers, but all major policy decisions are made by the teachers.

CONTACT seems to have achieved a balance which is satisfying to most of the students -- only 21% felt they should have more say or equality.

The majority of the students (65%) felt that their self-confidence and ability to get along with others had improved.

The evaluation instrument showed that CONTACT students have low self-concepts associated with family and peer relationships but not associated with

school endeavors. This suggests that a school such as CONTACT might help improve the students self-concepts by helping them in the area of peer relationships since little could be done about family relationships.

While 65% of the students reported an improvement in their self-confidence and ability to get along with others, the evaluation instruments suggested no improvement.

It is noteworthy, that the students who felt they had improved were much more likely to attribute that improvement to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere, freedom of expression and teachers' attitudes than to a sense of accomplishment. Several teachers, on the other hand, believed that an improvement in self-worth would come as a result of academic success.

CONTACT should probably give more consideration to the fact that the students feel inadequate and unworthy with respect to their peer relationships. Team sports, which the students seem to want at CONTACT, organized by teachers who understand the students' problems might be an excellent vehicle for helping the students in this area.

Only 25% of the students reported that they got the credits they planned to get while at CONTACT.

Most students enter CONTACT with very few high school credits, most students remain in CONTACT for less than seventeen school months (not including July and August) and most students obtain very few credits while at CONTACT.

Do students leave CONTACT because they are not getting credits or do they leave for other reasons before they get the credits they had planned to get?

The investigators were able to locate 44 students who had left CONTACT and ask them why they had left. Only 8 of them said they had left because they weren't getting ahead or weren't getting credits. The others gave a wide variety of reasons for leaving -- some personal reasons and some school-related reasons.

The solution to this problem of students remaining for short periods of time and receiving very few credits probably lies in solving some of the other problems which have been outlined in this report. However, as discussed in a preceding section, many students are working or continuing with their education in another setting after leaving CONTACT and cannot be considered failures.

CONTACT might also experiment with lengthening the afternoon blocks so that one half a credit could be obtained per block instead of one third a credit. The students might feel as if they had accomplished more, the longer time period might allow the teachers to go into more depth (which some students would like) and the students might be more likely to get the necessary assignments done over a longer time period.

The potential CONTACT Centre has for helping CONTACT School meet the needs of dropout students is exciting but has not been fully realized.

CONTACT Centre, operated by three workers, became a formal part of CONTACT School mostly because of the termination of a government grant which had initially supported it. The Centre then moved into the school and the Toronto Board of Education paid the salaries of the workers.

Low pay, poor accommodation and lack of job definitions have combined to produce low morale, confusion and ill-feelings.

The Centre should be and could contribute a great deal in the following areas:

- sports
- extra-curricular activities such as music
- community liaison
- counselling
- monitoring attendance
- searching out educational and occupational opportunities for the students
- scouting the community for resources for the courses and the speakers' hour.

In conclusion, this study has identified and discussed in detail the principal needs of students who have dropped out of the regular school system and elected to attend an alternative educational setting. The study has shown how a Toronto alternative school called CONTACT attempts to meet these needs and with what degree of success. The report should be of value to anyone interested in establishing a similar alternative school. There is also considerable "food for thought" for persons in the regular school system who are concerned about students who are potential dropouts. Finally, the report calls attention to the fact that it is virtually impossible for such an alternative school to operate independently of society and the regular school system and that, consequently, the school should never be given all the credit for its successes nor all the blame for its failures.

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APPENDIX A

Proposal for CONTACT with addendum, recommendations and  
amendments passed by the Toronto Board of Education on June 15, 1972.

#### PROPOSAL FOR "CONTACT"

##### Preamble

The concept of this school arose initially from concern over the increasing numbers of high school students who are dropping out of their regular schools. The reasons for this, admittedly, are complex. However, one of the main reasons is that the regular secondary school, at whatever academic or occupational stream, has been forced to cater to every individual who enters its programme. When students are found not benefiting from a regular programme, quite frequently a change from a straight academic programme to one with more emphasis on technical, commercial or vocational skills helps to improve the motivation and achievement of the individual students. For other students, however, it seems that the change required is not necessarily that of the programme content but rather than of the programme methodology. Certainly the students who drop out of the technical, commercial and vocational programmes confirm this. Therefore, in order to offer an opportunity for this kind of student we are suggesting that an alternative school be established by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto to help alleviate this problem, starting with a small unit of 50 students for the academic year 1972-1973.

##### Student Body

The students are to be drawn from two groups:

- (1) Students no longer on the roles of secondary schools in Toronto, who did not graduate before leaving, who are presently unemployed and who desire an opportunity to continue their secondary school education in an alternate setting. These students could come to CONTACT through referrals by former teachers or guidance counsellors, and community social service agencies.
- (2) Students who are presently on the roles of secondary schools in Toronto, but who are not benefiting from their regular programme, perhaps attending only sporadically and/or disrupting their classes. These students would be referred by their respective schools, if their schools and CONTACT agree that this alternative programme may be helpful.

A large proportion of the dropouts occur in the Inner City Area. Therefore, although CONTACT would be open to students from all sections of the City of Toronto, emphasis would be placed on students living in this area. Similarly, although mutual benefit will be derived from enrolling a number of students with already high achievement levels, it would be hoped that a larger proportion of students with average or below-average achievement levels would be enrolled.

##### Selection of Students

As has already been expressed, prospective students could be referred to CONTACT or approach CONTACT on their own initiative; they would be drawn from all streams of the secondary schools in Toronto. In order that all students may have equal access, limited only by the capacity of the school, there will be no formal academic criteria for entrance to CONTACT. Instead, the interests and needs of each student will be assessed on entering CONTACT at which time a programme of studies, mutually agreed upon, would be established. After sufficient time has elapsed to allow the student to adjust to the school and his programme, an evaluation, done in consultation with the student at all times, a decision would be made whether to continue the initial programme or make necessary adjustments to it. After this initial evaluation, further progress reports will be made at regular intervals. At the same time, care will be taken to ensure that these evaluations are done in such a way that the affective development of the student will not be impaired.

If one or more evaluations indicate that the student is not benefiting by the programme at CONTACT, especially after attempts have been made to adjust the activities to the student's needs and interests, it would seem only reasonable that the student would withdraw from the programme.

It is possible that the enrolment will not reach capacity until sometime later in the fall of 1972; however, we do not anticipate any difficulty in attracting a sizeable number of students within a few days of the opening of CONTACT in September.

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW

##### Curriculum

###### Affective Education

Considering the nature of the students at CONTACT, one of the primary responsibilities of the school will be to develop a solid feeling of self worth in every student. To this end, the methodology of the curriculum will stress co-operation rather than competition among the students, foster attitudes and social skills to help facilitate involvement of students in all facets of their community, and base achievement on individual interests, needs and abilities rather than on group norms.

###### Cognitive Development

CONTACT will utilize, to the greatest possible extent, a Problem Directed Approach (Problem Posing-Problem Solving) for two reasons: first, such an approach will provide a method where encouragement can be given to develop the skills of innovation, critical analysis, decision making, acting on decisions, and assessing the results of those acts; at the same time, it will provide a vehicle motivating students in the more traditional aspects of the curriculum whether it is simply remedial work in the basic skills or a scholarly presentation in an upper school discipline.

###### Programme Content

The CONTACT programme will follow closely the outline of H.S.I.

Students will select a programme of credit courses, based on their interests, needs and past achievements at former secondary schools. Because of the flexibility of H.S.I., and the various levels of subject depth allowable within each course, students of differing achievement levels and goal orientations will be able to fulfill the requirements for Secondary School Graduation Diploma. The staff at CONTACT will assist the students in locating outside resource people for special courses where necessary.

##### Location and Physical Plant

Because of the composition of the student body, as described above, it seems expedient to locate CONTACT in the Inner City of Toronto. As has already been stated, however, this would not preclude any student in the city from attending. Convenient access to the T.T.C. subway system seems almost an imperative.

Because of the nature of the students attending CONTACT, the routines of the school, both in terms of administration and programme, will be different from those of the regular secondary schools; groupings of students, timetabling of classes and individual sessions, types of activities, hours of operation, input of resource people and especially the alienation of these students from the existing schools make it obvious that CONTACT could not share facilities with an existing school. Minimum accommodation would consist of a large common room, two to four smaller "class" rooms, a kitchen and an outdoor area. These facilities could probably be found in a Church, "Y", or Community Hall.

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### Structure

CONTACT for 1972-1973 will consist of the following:

- (1) 50 students
- (2) 4 full-time certificated teachers and two part-time lay assistants paid by the Toronto Board of Education
- (3) resource personnel provided by both the Toronto Board of Education and outside sources to aid in such things as evaluation of students and programmes, counselling, administration and secretarial services, co-ordination with community agencies and parents, and so on. Although the student-teacher ratio is somewhat lower than the city average, it is similar to that of the special high schools and vocational schools, and seems appropriate to the nature of CONTACT.

#### **(A) Ultimate Responsibility:**

As is the case with all other Toronto schools, CONTACT will hold its license through the authority of the Toronto Board of Education, and will be responsible to it.

In the same way, and for the same reasons that it would be inadvisable to locate CONTACT in an existing school, it would also seem necessary to keep separate the lines of communication and responsibility from any specific school. Students will be drawn from all parts of the city; programmes by the very nature of the school will be different than those of most or all existing secondary schools. Therefore, direct contact with the board, through the Director or a Superintendent designated by him is essential.

#### **(B) Decision Making:**

Implicit in the school's philosophy and operation is the belief that students must be given an opportunity to participate in the democratic decision making processes of the school, not only to provide relevant feedback and decisions concerning the ongoing programmes of the school, but also to insure that the students will have the right to in-

volve themselves in a decision-making process, and the responsibility of following through on their decisions; it is only through the continual practice of making increasingly complex decisions in a democratic setting that students will become aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and become knowledgeable of the methodology of democratic structures.

#### **(C) Initial Staffing and Administration of CONTACT:**

When CONTACT is approved by the board, the undersigned individuals would select from themselves or from outside the group if circumstances necessitate, the initial four teachers for CONTACT. This selection would be presented to the Director or his designate for consideration and approval. Although the academic backgrounds of the teachers selected should represent a cross-section of the disciplinary groupings outlined in H.S.I., of great importance is the individual teachers' belief in, and acceptance of the philosophy of CONTACT and his/her ability to fit into its community and provide positive benefits towards fulfilling its purposes.

From the four teachers selected the undersigned individuals will also appoint an interim co-ordinator who, in addition to his/her regular activities as a staff member at CONTACT, will be responsible for:

- (a) ensuring that the policy and administrative decisions made by the staff are carried out
- and-
- (b) serving as official spokesman for CONTACT in its normal relations with the Toronto Board of Education and other outside groups.

**(b) Ultimate Decision Making Within CONTACT:**

As the CONTACT community develops and stabilizes during its first academic year, decision making powers will be gradually assumed by two overlapping bodies within the school: first, the entire community consisting of all students and staff plus resource personnel and especially parents who are involved in the organizing activities of CONTACT, shall meet weekly to discuss and resolve items of concern to the entire community; secondly, an executive committee made up of representatives of each of the constituents of CONTACT shall assume an administrative and advisory role within the school, and jointly select a coordinator for the school.

**APPENDIX TO "PROPOSAL FOR CONTACT"**

**Programme**

In the short space of one week since "Proposal for CONTACT" was placed on the agenda of the Alternatives in Education Committee of the Toronto Board of Education, we have been provided with many exceptional opportunities to reflect on our original proposal. The remarks of the committee members, Mr. Milloy and others who spoke at the May 8th meeting proved extremely enlightening; our colleagues' comments during the past week, as well as those collected via letters and phone calls (all extremely favourable) from individuals responding to the media coverage provided opportunities for further reflections on our plans; finally, Mr. Milloy's generous donation of his time to allow us to expand and explore our concerns and ideas both philosophical and practical was of great help and much appreciated.

As a result of these formal and informal discussions of the proposal for CONTACT, this addendum has been prepared, first to clarify items previously

not made explicit, and secondly to modify some positions and strengthen others. Also included is a tentative proposal for a budget for CONTACT.

**Comparison with other Alternative Schools in Toronto**

As can be expected, the description of CONTACT has drawn, and rightly so, comparisons with other alternative models within the city, and especially with the Toronto Board's S.E.E.D. programme and Adult Day Classes.

Although on the surface, CONTACT may seem somewhat akin to the S.E.E.D. project, in fact there are basic and substantial differences, not only in the proposed student body and curriculum but also in its basic structure. First, the student body attracted to S.E.E.D., whether intentional or otherwise, comprises, almost entirely, students who have above average achievement in at least the basic skill areas. While it is our hope that at least some students of this achievement level attend CONTACT, we are planning for "a larger proportion of students with average or below average achievement levels" (See page 2 of the proposal).

As a result, programme content would obviously be much different than that at S.E.E.D. Remedial courses in the basic skills will be necessary for some, while most will follow general level high school subjects. Because the basic purpose of CONTACT is to allow students to complete a regular Secondary School Graduation Diploma programme in an alternative setting, it is expected that all will enroll in a programme of credit courses to achieve this aim.

To this end, the structure will be such to encourage each student to seek out a programme fitting his needs and interests, and to follow through on that basic decision. It is expected that the students and the administrative body of CONTACT, realizing this basic aim, will ensure that every participant is meeting his or her individual responsibility towards meeting these ends.

In the "Proposal for CONTACT" it was suggested that the student body would be drawn, not only from existing school rolls, but also from former students of secondary schools who had not graduated before leaving their respective schools. Presently these individuals have two avenues for returning to full time schooling within the Toronto Board, either by re-enrolling in a secondary school, if not too much time has elapsed since previously attending, or entering the Adult Day Classes at the Y.M.C.A. Both have proven successful for a large majority of former students who have sought out this possibility.

For other students, however, and especially those whose reasons for leaving their former schools related more directly to their inability to cope successfully with the routines of those schools, it would seem unlikely that returning to the same kind of environment would necessarily lead to success. For this reason, it is our feeling that an alternative methodology is required, and especially one in a setting designed specifically to meet individual needs and thus enhance feelings of self-worth, as an individual and as a member of the community at large.

#### Prediction of Success - Methodology, Structure and Evaluation

We are all aware of the recent attempts made to innovate educational methodologies, especially in new techniques for teaching specific academic disciplines. As an example, one may well look at the teaching of reading. Recent decades have seen shifts from the phonetic to the word-recognition approach, and back again. For each method, techniques such as "programmed learning," employing special books and teaching machines, and several audio-visual approaches (usually requiring expensive equipment) have been promoted. Arguments have evolved over the relevance of the content of reading material. Lately, the dimension of accountability has been added, and out of that has

come contract teaching by private companies. In the final analysis, many of these attempts have suffered varying degrees of failure.

It is our feeling that these concerns for techniques in skill instruction should be relegated to a position of less importance, especially for students such as those at CONTACT. Surely of prime concern in the learning process is the motivating factors. Until a student is aware of the reasons for wanting, and needing, to read, all the gimmicks in the world can do little to encourage real learning. In short, "you cannot teach what one does not wish to learn."

It is our purpose, then, to motivate the student and re-establish in him a sense of self-worth. We see CONTACT as assisting in the development of these necessary pre-conditions for education by:

- (1) giving attention to the individual needs and interests of the student.
- (2) providing flexibility for the development of greater responsibility for decisions made by the students.
- (3) increasing personal contact and rapport between all members of the community.

A further possible cause for the lack of motivation on the part of some Inner City students is the alienation of their families from the routines of the regular school system. It seems apparent if students are to achieve in an academic environment, then it is only necessary that the family understand, and be involved in the philosophy and workings of the school; in this way, positive reinforcement will be provided in the home as well as at school. To this end, it seems imperative that the students and parents, as well as the staff, be given a meaningful role in the decision-making processes of the school.

Finally, it is our concern that a continuous evaluation be made of

both the general program at CONTACT and the individual progress of each student. On entering CONTACT, the levels of achievement in the basic skills of each student will be assessed so that a suitable programme may be drawn up. This assessment will also form the first part of a longitudinal evaluation of skill acquisition, so that an objective examination of the overall success of CONTACT may be made. As well, the more normal subjective evaluation of each student's progress in each of his or her courses will be made by the individual teachers concerned, in consultation with the student whenever possible. In this way, the two separate forms of evaluation will provide checks on the success of the program, and allow the staff to make revisions to the curriculum when and if necessary.

#### Proposed Expenditures for CONTACT

1972 has become a year of monetary crisis for the Toronto Board, and we are as aware of this problem as anyone could be. We also realize that the "Proposal for CONTACT" could not have come at a more administratively inopportune time, only after the 1972 budget had finally been struck. For this we can only apologize, and add that we, too, wish that much more time were available for the Board to consider this proposal along with their other more normal items.

Having said this, however, we can only reiterate our concern for the students, and former students, of Toronto to whom we have addressed our efforts. Surely to delay this project one more year would only further exacerbate the situation. In the fervent hope that we may begin our task this September, we are suggesting the following, bare minimum of expenditure for the last four months of 1972; this is being done with the understanding that the Board would see fit to finance CONTACT more appropriately to its nature during the 1973 fiscal year.

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#### Physical Plant

Because of the necessity of locating CONTACT apart from any existing secondary school for the reasons originally stated, it is our hope that we will be able to find suitable accommodation which the owners, in understanding our present financial difficulties, would be willing to donate at little or no cost for the months of September to December, 1972. Presumably this donation would be made with the understanding that, if the accommodation proved suitable, the Toronto Board would see fit to recompense the owners, at an equitable rent, for CONTACT's use of the building during the calendar year 1973.

#### Equipment, Supplies and Textbooks

Because of the expected variety of achievements, needs and interests in the initial student body enrolling in CONTACT, numerous and varied textbooks and supplies are of crucial importance to the program. However, the needs of specific students will not, in many cases, be known in full until the program at CONTACT has progressed somewhat, and many of the required items can be obtained over the space of the first few months of operation, perhaps partly from surplus stock in other secondary schools. In this way also, the staff will be able to establish more precisely the range of books and supplies required for a school of this type, and specific requests of a more permanent nature can be made for the ensuing budget year.

Basic equipment of the calendar year 1972 can possibly be kept to the minimum of a sixteen millimeter projector and screen, a typewriter, a duplicating machine, basic furniture and a telephone.

#### Miscellaneous

Implicit in a proposal of this nature are other essential expendi-

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tures, such as curriculum activities, curriculum evaluation, professional development, expenses for resource persons and community activities, contingencies and so on. While we hope that the Board will ultimately see fit to fund these items, we are prepared to minimize expenditures on them during the rest of this calendar year, in light of the general financial restrictions.

#### Students

Although it is hoped that CONTACT will draw students who are either on or off the rolls of other schools, we would be willing, for the first year, to enroll almost entirely students who are presently not on the rolls of the Toronto Board. In this way, extra cutting expenditures will be generated (assuming the present projection enrollments of all regular secondary schools will hold up in September). Thus, the Provincial Government's share, approximately one-third of the per-pupil costs, can be assumed. If necessary, CONTACT can formally enroll its students before the end of this term, in order to further assure Metro Board and Provincial Government support.

#### Staff

Considering the nature of the school, and its expected state of flux during the first months of its inception, the full complement of four teachers, plus at least one of the two part-time lay assistants, will be essential from the first day. At the same time, it is certainly not our intention to deprive any existing secondary school of even one of its needed, and already timetabled, teaching positions. Therefore we are asking the impossible, and are hoping that the Board will locate from the existing 1972 budget the money required for CONTACT's September to December, 1972 period. With our expectation of minimal expenditures in facilities and supplies during this short period, and taking into consideration the Provincial Government's contribution, we are, in effect, asking the Board for approximately two-thirds

of four month's salaries to be taken out of this present budget.

#### Recommendations

1. That the Board approve the concept of the CONTACT School proposal as outlined by the CONTACT School group in their proposals dated May 8 and 15, 1972, providing that accommodation is available for the school at no cost to the Board.
2. That the Director of Education, after consultation with the CONTACT representatives, and any other interested groups, report on methods of staffing the CONTACT School in order to achieve the purposes of the project.

#### Amendments

1. That the Director of Education not act on the recommendation to establish the CONTACT School if it is necessary to reduce staff in other schools in order to staff the CONTACT school.
2. That the Director of Education report following the first year of the CONTACT School's operation on the success of the school from the viewpoints of both staff and students, the report to include the number of students who were enrolled when the school opened and the number enrolled at the end of the first year.

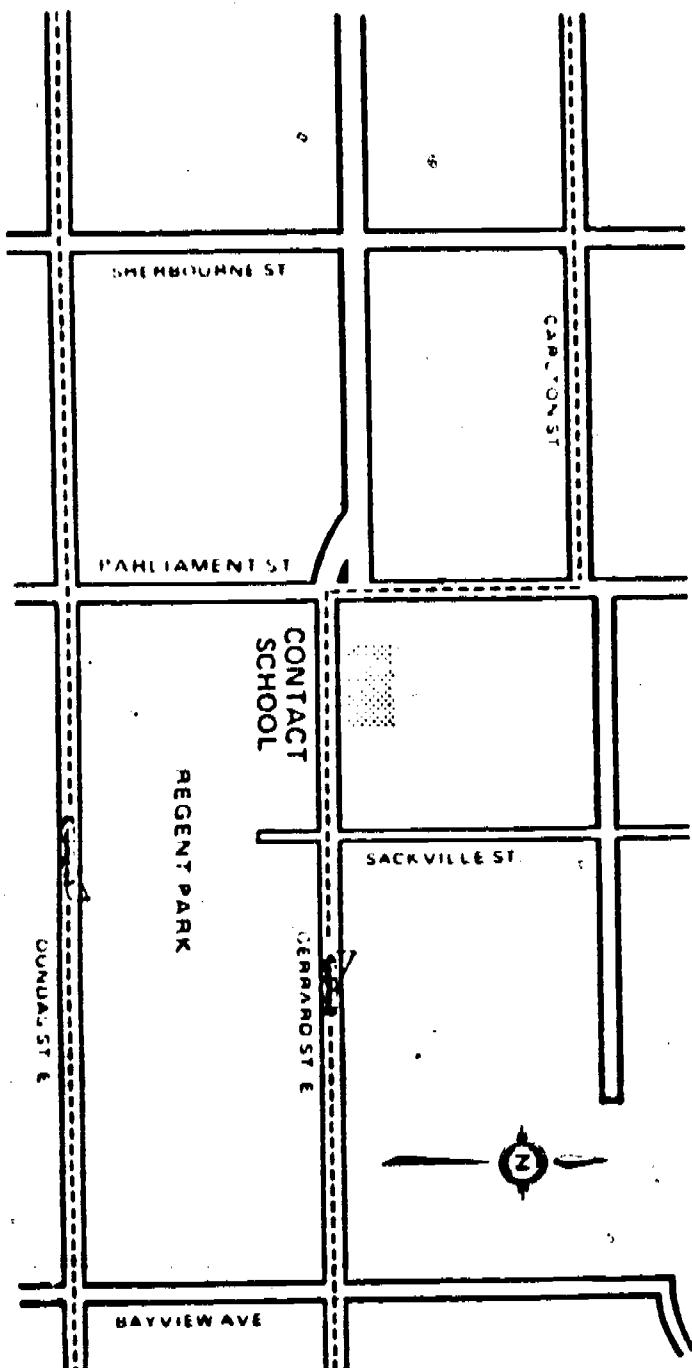
**APPENDIX B**

**A pamphlet describing CONTACT distributed by  
The Toronto Board of Education**

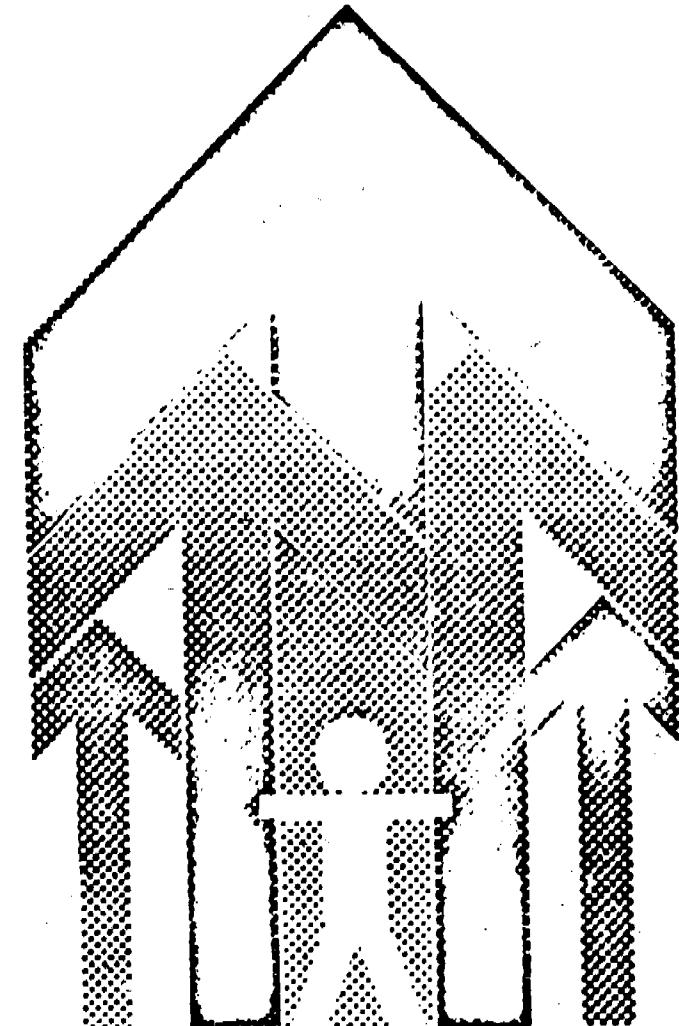
**FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION**

Contact School  
310 Gerrard Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5A 2G7  
922-1314

Contact School Education  
and Resource Centre  
967-5258



**CONTACT  
SCHOOL**



2/79  
**TORONTO  
BOARD OF  
EDUCATION**

**TORONTO  
BOARD OF  
EDUCATION**

# YOL CONTACT SCHOOL CONTACTS SCHOOL CONTACT SCHOOL CONTACTS

## WHAT IS CONTACT?

It is a full time academic secondary school operated by the Toronto Board of Education.

## WHO GOES TO CONTACT?

It is designed for two groups of people:

- those who have 'dropped out' of school and now want to return;
- students who are attending other secondary schools, but who feel they are not benefiting from their programs.

## IS THERE ANY AGE LIMIT?

No. Most students will be of secondary school age (14-21 years). But persons over 21 who can benefit from the program are also welcome to attend.

## WHAT PREVIOUS SCHOOLING

### MUST STUDENTS HAVE?

Contact is open to any person of secondary school age or over who wants to be in school, no matter what grade they were in at their previous school.

### MUST STUDENTS BE ABLE TO READ AT A CERTAIN LEVEL TO ENROL?

No. Many students at Contact come in order to catch up in reading and classes are organized in such a way to help this happen.

## HOW DO STUDENTS FIND OUT IF CONTACT IS REALLY FOR THEM?

For the first three weeks at Contact a student is enrolled on a trial basis. If after that time the student and the staff feel that Contact is the right place for him or her the student is enrolled on a permanent basis.

## WHAT KIND OF COURSES ARE GIVEN?

Contact offers basic courses in English and Mathematics. Many students are able to use these courses to catch up in reading, writing and mathematics. When a basic course is completed, students move onto more advanced work.

Students at Contact also take community studies courses which include academic subjects such as Geography, History, Man in Society, Science, Music, Art, Typing, Consumer Studies, Home Economics, Dramatic Arts, and Physical and Health Education.

In addition, there will be an opportunity to participate in a community outreach-inreach volunteer program.

## ARE THESE CREDIT COURSES?

Yes. Most courses offered at Contact at the secondary school level are approved by the Ontario Ministry of Education and are worth credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma.

## HOW ARE THE STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SCHOOL DECISIONS?

Every week there is a General Meeting involving the entire school body at which the students are involved in making decisions about discipline, in planning after-school activities and trips, and in making recommendations on programs. There is also a Judiciary Committee to make rulings on the conduct of students.

## HOW IS THE SCHOOL INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY?

The Contact Education and Resource Centre is located in the school. Three street workers with the Centre are involved in - acting as a liaison with the community; providing an education information service for the community; seeking out students from the area who had 'dropped out' to see if they would like to return to school either at Contact or some other Board school; and co-ordinating the community outreach-inreach program.

Additional responsibilities include, liaison with feeder schools, volunteer programs, extra curricular activities including the Contact School Travelling Show.

## ATTENDANCE?

Attendance is compulsory and is monitored daily by the Street workers.

## WHAT IS THE ENROLMENT?

For the 1978-79 school year there are 8 teachers and 3 street-workers with the total student enrolment of about 110 students.

## WHERE IS CONTACT?

Contact is now located at 310 Gerrard St. East, near the corner of Parliament and Gerrard. The school telephone number is 922-1314. Contact Education Centre 967-5258.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Every Thursday at 12 noon a service is available to students and parents, guidance counsellors and social workers or anyone who wants to find out more about the school. No appointment necessary, please come.

**APPENDIX C**

**Program Timetables  
for  
CONTACT**

CONTACT  
PROGRAM TIMETABLE  
1973-74

Monday/Thursday	Tuesday/Friday	Wednesday
9 - 10 Math	9 - 10:15	9 - 10 Town Hall Meeting
10 - 10:15 Break	English	10 - 10:45 Gym or Options
10:15 - 10:45 GROUP	10:45 - 11 Break	10:45 - 11 Break
10:45 - 12 English	11 - 12 Math	11 - 12 Speakers' Hour
12:00 - 1:00 LUNCH		
1:00 - 3:30 Community Studies		1:00 - 3:30 Volunteer Program

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CONTACT  
 PROGRAM TIMETABLE  
 (effective April 2, 1975)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-10:00	Math	General Meeting	Math	Math	Math
10:00-10:30	Group	Group	Gym/Film	Group	Group
10:30-10:45	Break	Break		Break	Break
10:45-11:30	Regular English	Regular English	Break 10:45-11:00 Regular English	Speakers' Hour	Regular English
11:30-12:00	Typing/ Special English	Typing/ Special English	Typing/ Special English		Typing/ Special English
12:00-1:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00-3:30	Community Studies	Community Studies	Wednesday After- noon Programme	Community Studies	Community Studies

CONTACT  
PROGRAM TIMETABLE  
(1978-79)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 to 9:50	9:00 to 9:30 Group English	English	English	English	English
9:50 to 10:05	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:05 to 10:55	Option	Speakers' Hour	Option	General Meeting	Option
10:55 to 11:10	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
11:10 to 12:00	Math	Math	11:30 to 11:50 Group	Math	Math
12:00 to 1:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 to 2:15	Community Studies	Community Studies	Community In/Out	Community Studies	Community Studies
2:15 to 2:30	Break	Break	Reach Programme	Break	Break
2:30 to 3:30	Community Studies	Community Studies	1:00 to 3:30	Community Studies	Community Studies

APPENDIX D

Letter and form sent to various groups of people  
to identify the needs of dropout students

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THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR THE CITY OF TORONTO  
155 College Street, Toronto M5T 1P6, Canada, 598-4931

Research Department

October 5, 1977

TO:

Recommendation No. 15 (approved by School Programs Committee on June 28, 1977) of the Report of the Patterns of Dropping Out Committee states that:

"the Contact School concept be evaluated to determine how it meets the needs of dropout students". (p. 12)

On October 3, 1977, we met with Contact School Staff to discuss a plan for the evaluation. (A copy is attached). One of the first steps in this plan is to gather information on the needs of the students at Contact School as perceived by different groups of people. You are a member of one of the groups from whom we would like to collect ideas.

Please list on the attached form what you feel are the needs of students who attend Contact. List these objectives (needs) in order of importance and feel free to list as many as you like. Please return the forms to the Research Department.

Thank you.

Sylvia Larter  
Research Associate

Janis Garshman  
Research Assistant

/lt

Enclosure

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OBJECTIVES OF CONTACT SCHOOL  
(in order of importance)

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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5.

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APPENDIX E

Student Interview Schedule  
for  
Students Who Had Been in CONTACT  
for Five or more Months

NOTE: Response cards are shown in Appendix G

\*These interviews were conducted by telephone or face-to-face at CONTACT  
according to which was most convenient for the student.

CONTACT STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE  
FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN IN CONTACT FOR  
FIVE OR MORE MONTHS

What other things would have helped you improve?

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Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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I. Basics

Has Contact helped you improve your reading, writing and math skills?

## Card 1

For each subject, choose the number on the card that indicates how much you think you have improved.

1. Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What other things would have helped you improve?

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2. Writing \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What other things would have helped you improve?

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3. Mathematics \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_II. Social Skills

How has CONTACT helped you with the following things? Again, I will read out ratings for each one.

## Card 2

1. Self-confidence (feeling better about yourself, etc.)

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What could have been improved?

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2. Getting along with others \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What could have been improved?

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3. **Self-discipline**  
(getting to school on time, getting work done, etc.)

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

What could have been improved? \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Life Skills**

When you were at CONTACT, did you learn anything about the following things?

**Card 3 (Read card)**

1. **Citizens' rights**  
(street law, government, right to protest, etc.)

What did you learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you have liked to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you have liked to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Social issues**  
(sexuality, racism, unemployment, women's rights, consumerism, etc.)

What did you learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you have liked to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Knowledge of community (the city)**  
(agencies in the city, museum, art gallery, community events, etc.)

What did you learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you have liked to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Knowledge of future educational and job opportunities** \_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you have liked to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Did being at CONTACT help you learn to study independently?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

IV. Democratic and Relaxing Environment

Card 4

1. How did you feel about expressing your opinions in CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

(Read Card 4)  
Identify the occasions when you felt restricted. \_\_\_\_\_

Card 5

2. How much of a say did you have in making decisions and rules concerning CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

(Read Card 5)  
If 1, 2, 3; -- Where could there have been improvement? \_\_\_\_\_

Card 6

3. What do you think about the relationship between teachers and students in CONTACT?

(Read Card 6)  
What makes it (their answer)? \_\_\_\_\_

Card 7

4. How did you feel when you were at CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

(Read Card 7)  
What made you feel tense?/relaxed? \_\_\_\_\_

Card 8

5. How did you feel about the amount of movement that was allowed around the school during class time? \_\_\_\_\_

(Read Card 8)  
Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Card 9

6. How did you feel about the amount of discipline and structure in CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

(Read Card 9)  
Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**V. Individualization and Flexibility**

1. Did you get enough individual attention at CONTACT?

YES  NO

Explain \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did CONTACT provide you with the courses you wanted?

YES  NO

If no, which courses would you have liked? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did CONTACT provide you with the extra-curricular activities and sports that you wanted? YES  NO

If no, what would you have liked? \_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Credits**

1. Have you accomplished your plans for credits?

\_\_\_\_\_

**General Information**

1. What do you think about CONTACT Centre? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why did you come to CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How did you find out about it? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you like about CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you dislike about CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Personal Data**

1. Were you born in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_

(If Yes) What province? \_\_\_\_\_

(If No) What country were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Was English the first language you learned to speak? \_\_\_\_\_

(If No) What language did you learn to speak first? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you learn to speak English and another language at the same time? \_\_\_\_\_

(If Yes) What was the other language? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are both parents alive and living with you?

Both

Only Mother

Only Father

Neither

5. What is your father's job now? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your mother's job now? \_\_\_\_\_

7. If lives with neither parent, but with someone else:

- With whom do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

- What is the job of the head of the household where you live? \_\_\_\_\_

- Does this person financially support you? (room, board and spending money?) \_\_\_\_\_

- (If No) Who financially supports you? \_\_\_\_\_

8. If lives alone:

- Where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you financially support yourself? \_\_\_\_\_
- (If Yes) What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
- (If No) Who financially supports you? \_\_\_\_\_

Any Other Comments About CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX F

Questions Added To The Student  
Interview Schedule\* For Students  
Who Had Dropped Out Of CONTACT  
Within Five Months After  
January and October\*\*

\*See Appendix E

\*\*These interviews were conducted by telephone

Questions Added To The Student  
Interview Schedule for Students  
Who Had Dropped Out Of CONTACT  
Within Five Months After  
January and October

1. Why did you drop out? (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are you doing now? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been doing that since you left CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you had any involvement with CONTACT Centre since you left the school? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX G  
Response Cards  
for  
Student Interview Schedules

CARD 1

1. I AM NOT AS GOOD AS I USED TO BE.
2. I HAVE STAYED THE SAME.
3. I HAVE IMPROVED A LITTLE.
4. I HAVE IMPROVED A LOT.

CARD 2

1. CONTACT HAS MADE THINGS WORSE.
2. CONTACT HAS MADE NO DIFFERENCE.
3. CONTACT HAS HELPED ME A LITTLE.
4. CONTACT HAS HELPED ME A LOT.

CARD 3

1. I HAVEN'T LEARNED ANYTHING.
2. I HAVE LEARNED A LITTLE.
3. I HAVE LEARNED A LOT.

CARD 4

1. VERY RESTRICTED.
2. RESTRICTED MOST OF THE TIME.
3. SOMETIMES FREE/SOMETIMES RESTRICTED.
4. FREE MOST OF THE TIME.
5. VERY FREE.

CARD 5

1. NONE
2. A LITTLE
3. SOME
4. A GREAT DEAL

CARD 6

1. POOR
2. O.K./NOT BAD
3. GOOD
4. EXCELLENT

CARD 7

1. TENSE ALL THE TIME
2. USUALLY TENSE
3. SOMETIMES RELAXED/SOMETIMES TENSE
4. USUALLY RELAXED
5. RELAXED ALL THE TIME

CARD 8

1. TOO LITTLE
2. IT'S ABOUT RIGHT
3. TOO MUCH

APPENDIX H

Student Interview Schedule\*  
for  
Students not accepted at  
CONTACT  
After probation period

\*These interviews were conducted by telephone

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STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

-2-

STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
STUDENTS NOT ACCEPTED AT CONTACT  
AFTER PROBATION PERIOD

This year there are researchers looking at CONTACT school to determine how the school meets the needs of students who have dropped out of other schools. We are interested in hearing your opinions of CONTACT for the short time that you were there.

We have a few questions that will probably take about ten minutes and hope that you won't mind answering them.

1. Can you first tell us how you found out about CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What made you decide to try to get into CONTACT? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. During those three weeks, did you want to "get on the rolls"? If yes, why did it not happen?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Is this the first time that you've tried to get on the rolls? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you going to try again? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What did you like and dislike about CONTACT while you were there? (students, teachers, courses, general structure, rules, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What do YOU think of CONTACT centre?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you had any involvement with the centre since you left the school?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What are you doing now?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been doing that since you left CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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To end off, a few personal questions:

1. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Were you born in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If YES) What province? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If NO) What country were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did you learn to speak English and another language at the same time? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If YES) What was the other language? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Was English the first language you learned to speak? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If NO) What language did you learn to speak first? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are both parents alive and living with you?  
Both \_\_\_\_\_  
Only Mother \_\_\_\_\_  
Only Father \_\_\_\_\_  
Neither \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your father's job now? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your mother's job now? \_\_\_\_\_
8. If lives with neither parent, but with someone else:  
- With whom do you live? \_\_\_\_\_  
- What is the job of the head of the household where you live? \_\_\_\_\_

- Does this person financially support you? (room, board and spending money)? \_\_\_\_\_  
- (If NO) Who financially supports you? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If lives alone:  
- Where do you live? \_\_\_\_\_  
- Do you financially support yourself? \_\_\_\_\_  
- (If YES) What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many hours a week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_  
- (If NO) Who financially supports you? \_\_\_\_\_

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Any other comments about CONTACT School or education in general \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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Q05

APPENDIX I

Student Interview Schedule\*  
for  
Students who left CONTACT in  
June 1978 and did not return

NOTE: The interviews were conducted six to ten  
months after June 1978.

\* These interviews were conducted by telephone

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STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR  
STUDENTS WHO LEFT CONTACT IN JUNE 1978  
AND DID NOT RETURN

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

This year, as you may know, there are researchers looking at CONTACT School to determine how the school meets the needs of students who have dropped out of other schools. We are phoning you because we would like to know what you have been doing since you left CONTACT in June 1978.

1. What are you doing now? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you been doing that since you left CONTACT? (jobs, school, looking for jobs) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why did you not come back to CONTACT in September? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX J  
Teacher Interview Schedule\*

\*These interviews were conducted face-to-face at CONTACT School

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TEACHER INTERVIEW

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Educational Background

High School

3. Do you speak any languages other than English? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Joining CONTACT:

When did you come to CONTACT?

How did you find out about it?

University

Why did you come to CONTACT?

Teacher Training

5. Degree of Involvement:

What is the average number of hours per week that you work (both at school and at home on school-related things)?

2. Work Experience

Teaching

How is this time broken down among:

Teaching \_\_\_\_\_

Counselling \_\_\_\_\_

Course Development \_\_\_\_\_

Course Preparation and Marking \_\_\_\_\_

Extra-Curricular (give examples) \_\_\_\_\_

Administration (meetings, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other

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6. What do you have to do at CONTACT that you wouldn't have to do at another school?

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What things don't you have to do here that you would have to do at another school?

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7. Before you came to CONTACT, what were your impressions of the school, and what did you believe you could accomplish here?

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Which impressions were correct and which ones proved to be incorrect?

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8. What do you like about working at CONTACT?

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Are there things that you dislike about working at CONTACT?

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9. What are the most important things about CONTACT that you feel affect students favourably?

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Are there any things that you feel need to be changed because they don't affect students favourably?

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10. Any other specific likes and dislikes about CONTACT?

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11. During your time at CONTACT have you experienced any changes?  
(e.g., in the students, in the general atmosphere of the school, etc.)

## PART II

As we mentioned earlier in the year, we are trying to evaluate, in depth, six needs that were identified through the fall survey. These were: basic skills, social skills, life skills, a democratic school atmosphere, individualization and flexibility, and the opportunity for the students to achieve their goals. One of the goals of the evaluation is to describe how these needs are being met. The next part of the interview will attempt to get at that information.

### 1. Basic

### a. Reading and Writing

How do you teach reading? (e.g., materials, teaching approach, diagnosis, evaluation).

The graph displays a single data series plotted against time. The y-axis represents the measured variable, and the x-axis represents time. The data shows a baseline level for a long period, followed by a rapid, exponential-like increase that continues until the end of the observed period. There are no other data points or markers present.

Have you taught reading in any other school? If so, how does your program differ from your previous program?

How are the methods that you use different from those generally used in other schools?

Are there methods that you have tried that have not been successful? Why?

Are there other things that you would like to try but haven't? Why?

What kind of teaching techniques have you found to be effective?

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5. Math

How do you teach math? (e.g., materials, teaching approach, diagnosis, evaluation).

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Have you taught math in any other school? If so, how does your program differ from your previous program?

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How are the methods that you use different from those generally used in other schools?

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Are there methods that you have tried that have not been successful? Why?

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Are there other things that you would like to try but haven't? Why?

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What kind of teaching techniques have you found to be effective?

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2. Social Skills

The survey in the Fall indicated some social skills people felt were needed by CONTACT students. They were:

- self-worth
- sociability, compassion for others, getting along with others, co-operation vs. competition
- self-discipline
- responsibility

We would like you to comment on how you or the school as a whole attempts to meet these needs:

self-worth

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getting along with others

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self-discipline

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responsibility

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others?

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In which areas are you most successful?

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Which methods do you feel are most effective in teaching social skills?

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Are there any improvements which you feel could be made in this area?

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3. Life Skills

(This concept was not well defined by the fall survey respondents. Some of the skills that were mentioned were: knowledge of citizens' rights, social issues, learning to learn, knowledge of community and knowledge of future educational and job options).

How do you attempt to deal with these needs?

citizens' rights

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social issues

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knowledge of community

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learning to learn

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knowledge of future educational and occupational possibilities

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others?

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In which areas are you most successful?

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Which methods do you feel are most effective in teaching these life skills?

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Are there any improvements which you feel could be made in teaching life skills?

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4. Democratic and Relaxing Environment

Almost all of the survey respondents felt that a need of dropout students was the existence of a democratic environment. We would like you to comment on some of the following ideas. Your comments should include how CONTACT deals with these concepts.

freedom of student expression

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students' share in decision-making

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good teacher-pupil relationship

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less bureaucracy

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freedom of mobility

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the formulation of rules

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discipline and structure

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In our case study interviews, we found there was a large disparity in the students' feelings about the amount of discipline and structure needed in the school. We would like you to comment on this.

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What characteristics of CONTACT do you believe contribute most to a democratic and relaxing atmosphere?

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Are there any improvements which you feel could be made in this area?

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3. Individualization - Flexibility

This concept was mentioned by some of the respondents of the survey.

In what way do you attempt to provide student individualization?

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What improvement do you feel could be made to better respond to the individual needs of students?

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-1251-

In what way is CONTACT more flexible than other schools?

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Are there things that are either too flexible or too inflexible?

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Other Comments

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PART III

What do you feel is the relationship between CONTACT Centre and CONTACT School?

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How does CONTACT Centre help meet the six needs of dropout students?

basic skills

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social skills

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life skills

3

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democratic and relaxing atmosphere

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individualization/flexibility

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**Academic and employment advancement**

**How does the CONTACT centre staff contribute in any other way?**

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APPENDIX K

CONTACT Centre worker Interview Schedule\*

\*These interviews were conducted face-to-face at CONTACT School

CONTACT CENTRE WORKER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 2 -

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Educational Background

High School

4. Joining CONTACT

When did you come to CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you find out about it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why did you come to CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

University

5. What do you feel is the relationship between CONTACT Centre and CONTACT School?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Degree of Involvement

What is the average number of hours per week that you work (both at school and at home on school-related things)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How is the time broken down among:

attendance problems \_\_\_\_\_

counselling \_\_\_\_\_

recruitment \_\_\_\_\_

academic activities (give examples) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

extra-curricular activities (give examples) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Work Experience

Related

Other

3. Do you speak any languages other than English?

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administration

Other

7. What do you feel is your most important contribution to CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

How could your contribution to CONTACT be improved?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. What do you like about working at CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there things that you dislike about working at CONTACT?

\_\_\_\_\_

2311

9. What are the most important things about CONTACT that you feel affect students favourably?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any things that you feel need to be changed because they don't affect students favourably?

\_\_\_\_\_

1256

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APPENDIX L  
IOX Self-Appraisal Inventory

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:**

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE A SERIES OF STATEMENTS PEOPLE SOMETIMES USE TO DESCRIBE THEMSELVES. PLEASE READ EACH STATEMENT CAREFULLY AND DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT IS TRUE FOR YOU.

IF YOU THINK A STATEMENT IS TRUE FOR YOU, CHECK THE TRUE SQUARE.

IF YOU THINK A STATEMENT IS NOT TRUE FOR YOU, CHECK THE NOT TRUE SQUARE.

THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS, SO  
RESPOND TO EACH STATEMENT AS HONESTLY AS YOU CAN.

1. I LIKE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE.
2. I CAN DISAGREE WITH MY FAMILY.
3. SCHOOLWORK IS FAIRLY EASY FOR ME.
4. I AM SATISFIED TO BE JUST WHAT I AM.
5. I WISH I GOT ALONG BETTER WITH OTHER KIDS.
6. I OFTEN GET IN TROUBLE AT HOME.
7. I USUALLY LIKE MY TEACHERS.
8. I AM A CHEERFUL PERSON.
9. OTHER KIDS ARE OFTEN MEAN TO ME.
10. I DO MY SHARE OF WORK AT HOME.
11. I OFTEN FEEL UPSET IN SCHOOL.
12. I OFTEN LET OTHER KIDS HAVE THEIR WAY.
13. MOST KIDS HAVE FEWER FRIENDS THAN I DO.
14. NO ONE PAYS MUCH ATTENTION TO ME AT HOME.
15. I CAN ALWAYS GET GOOD GRADES IF I WANT TO.
16. I CAN ALWAYS BE TRUSTED.
17. I AM EASY TO LIKE.
18. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE HOME.
19. I FORGET MOST OF WHAT I LEARN.
20. I AM POPULAR WITH KIDS MY OWN AGE.
21. I AM POPULAR WITH GIRLS.
22. MY FAMILY IS GLAD WHEN I DO THINGS WITH THEM.
23. I OFTEN VOLUNTEER IN SCHOOL.
24. I AM A HAPPY PERSON

25. I AM LONELY VERY OFTEN.
26. MY FAMILY RESPECTS MY IDEAS.
27. I AM A GOOD STUDENT.
28. I OFTEN DO THINGS THAT I'M SORRY FOR LATER.
29. OLDER KIDS DO NOT LIKE ME.
30. I BEHAVE BADLY AT HOME.
31. I OFTEN GET DISCOURAGED IN SCHOOL.
32. I WISH I WERE YOUNGER.
33. I AM ALWAYS FRIENDLY TOWARD OTHER PEOPLE.
34. I USUALLY TREAT MY FAMILY AS WELL AS I SHOULD.
35. MY TEACHER MAKES ME FEEL I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
36. I ALWAYS LIKE BEING THE WAY I AM.
37. MOST PEOPLE ARE MUCH BETTER LIKED THAN I AM.
38. I CAUSE TROUBLE TO MY FAMILY.
39. I AM SLOW IN FINISHING MY SCHOOL WORK.
40. I AM OFTEN UNHAPPY.
41. I AM POPULAR WITH BOYS.
42. I KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AT HOME.
43. I CAN GIVE A GOOD REPORT IN FRONT OF THE CLASS.
44. I AM NOT AS NICE LOOKING AS MOST PEOPLE.
45. I DON'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS.
46. I SOMETIMES ARGUE WITH MY FAMILY.

- 47. I AM PROUD OF MY SCHOOL WORK.
- 48. IF I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, I USUALLY SAY IT.
- 49. I AM AMONG THE LAST TO BE CHOSEN FOR TEAMS.
- 50. I FEEL THAT MY FAMILY ALWAYS TRUSTS ME.
- 51. I AM A GOOD READER.
- 52. I DON'T WORRY MUCH.
- 53. IT IS HARD FOR ME TO MAKE FRIENDS.
- 54. MY FAMILY WOULD HELP ME IN ANY KIND OF TROUBLE.
- 55. I AM NOT DOING AS WELL IN SCHOOL AS I WOULD LIKE TO.
- 56. I HAVE A LOT OF SELF CONTROL.
- 57. FRIENDS USUALLY FOLLOW MY IDEAS.
- 58. MY FAMILY UNDERSTANDS ME.
- 59. I FIND IT HARD TO TALK IN FRONT OF THE CLASS.
- 60. I OFTEN FEEL ASHAMED OF MYSELF.
- 61. I WISH I HAD MORE CLOSE FRIENDS.
- 62. MY FAMILY OFTEN EXPECTS TOO MUCH OF ME.
- 63. I AM GOOD IN MY SCHOOL WORK.
- 64. I AM A GOOD PERSON.
- 65. SOMETIMES I AM HARD TO BE FRIENDLY WITH.
- 66. I GET UPSET EASILY AT HOME.
- 67. I LIKE TO BE CALLED ON IN CLASS.
- 68. I WISH I WERE A DIFFERENT PERSON.
- 69. I AM FUN TO BE WITH.
- 70. I AM AN IMPORTANT PERSON TO MY FAMILY.
- 71. MY CLASSMATES THINK I AM A GOOD STUDENT.
- 72. I AM SURE OF MYSELF.

5

75. OFTEN I DON'T LIKE TO BE WITH OTHER KIDS.  
76. MY FAMILY AND I HAVE A LOT OF FUN TOGETHER.  
75. I WOULD LIKE TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL.  
76. I CAN ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.  
77. I WOULD RATHER BE WITH KIDS YOUNGER THAN I AM.  
78. MY FAMILY USUALLY CONSIDERS MY FEELINGS.  
79. I CAN DISAGREE WITH MY TEACHER.  
80. I CAN'T BE DEPENDED ON.

TRUE	NOT TRUE

33

40

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APPENDIX M  
Social Skills Rating Scale

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**SOCIAL SKILLS RATING SCALE**

Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am familiar with this student's social skills

I am not familiar with this student's social skills

Never	Not Usually	Sometimes	Often	Always
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Please circle your responses.  
Be sure to respond to all items.

Never	Not Usually	Sometimes	Often	Always
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1. Gets along with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
2. Gets along with other students	1	2	3	4	5
3. Gossips about students and teachers	1	2	3	4	5
4. Steals	1	2	3	4	5
5. Listens to others in group discussions	1	2	3	4	5
6. Distracts other students	1	2	3	4	5
7. Lies	1	2	3	4	5
8. Withdrawn	1	2	3	4	5
9. Accepts criticism	1	2	3	4	5
10. Impulsive	1	2	3	4	5
11. Fights with other students	1	2	3	4	5
12. Tolerant of other races	1	2	3	4	5
13. Can speak easily in front of a small group (less than 10).	1	2	3	4	5

14. Avoids participating in group activities

1 2 3 4 5

15. Makes friends easily

1 2 3 4 5

16. Has concern for others

1 2 3 4 5

17. Respects property

1 2 3 4 5

18. Cheats

1 2 3 4 5

19. Gets into trouble when no one is watching

1 2 3 4 5

20. Wants too much attention

1 2 3 4 5

21. Tolerant of other sexual orientations

1 2 3 4 5

22. Can speak easily in front of a large group (over 10)

1 2 3 4 5

23. Attacks others in group discussions

1 2 3 4 5

24. Acts superior to other students

1 2 3 4 5

25. Selfish

1 2 3 4 5

26. Wanders aimlessly

1 2 3 4 5

27. Hyperactive

1 2 3 4 5

28. Teases other students

1 2 3 4 5

29. Adjusts easily to new situations

1 2 3 4 5

30. Bossy

1 2 3 4 5

Please check that you responded to all items.

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**APPENDIX N**  
**Life Skills Questionnaire**

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LIFE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE\*

Check or Fill in the  
Correct Answers (1)

(1) 1. According to law, you have to go to the police station with a policeman if he tells you.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 2. Men need more education than women.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 3. Most of the laws are made by policemen.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 4. If you pay rent, you are eligible to file an income tax return.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 5. In a marriage, the man should be the head of the household.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 6. You always need a Grade 12 diploma to get into a community college or university.

True  
 False  
 Don't Know

(1) 7. Have you ever been involved in a protest?

Yes  
 No  
 Don't Know

\* The marks allotted for each question are shown in the boxes.

8. Which of the following places in the city have you visited?

museum  
 science centre  
 Ontario Place  
 a health clinic  
 live theatre  
 newspaper office  
 Metro Zoo  
 The Terrace  
 Race Track  
 St. Lawrence Market  
 art gallery  
 planetarium  
 a legal clinic  
 a public library  
 Harbourfront  
 Woodgreen Community Centre  
 Jimmy Simpson Community Centre  
 Centre Island  
 Kensington Market

(1) 9. Where would you get help with landlord/tenant problems?

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 10. Name one legal clinic in Toronto.

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) 11. What would you do if you didn't like a decision that was passed by the Board of Education? (Check as many as you like)

nothing  
 protest at the Board  
 tell my friends  
 tell my parents  
 tell my teachers  
 tell my trustees  
 don't know

12. Which of the following are venereal diseases (V.D.)?

syphilis  
 bronchitis  
 gonorrhoea  
 cancer  
 glaucoma  
 psoriasis  
 ulcers  
 tuberculosis

(2)  
(subtract wrong answers)

(3) 13. List 5 methods of birth control.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 14. Name one health clinic in Toronto.

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 15. How long do you have to work within one year to qualify for unemployment insurance?

1 week

4 weeks

13 weeks

40 weeks

(1) 16. How old do you have to be to vote in Canada?

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 17. Give an example of racism.

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 18. Give an example of sexual prejudice.

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 19. List one good thing about buying on credit.

\_\_\_\_\_

(1) 20. List one bad thing about buying on credit.

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) 21. Which of the following foods contain protein?

chips

beef

milk

fish

bread

peas

lettuce

peanut

chocolate

oranges

cheese

apple juice

coke

(3) (subtract wrong answers)

(4) 22. What are four important items a family should include in its budget?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

(3) 23. Name two agencies or ways to get help when you have problems with the things you buy.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

(3) 24. Name two agencies you could go to if you were looking for a job.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL = 47.5

305

307